



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 07575374 3

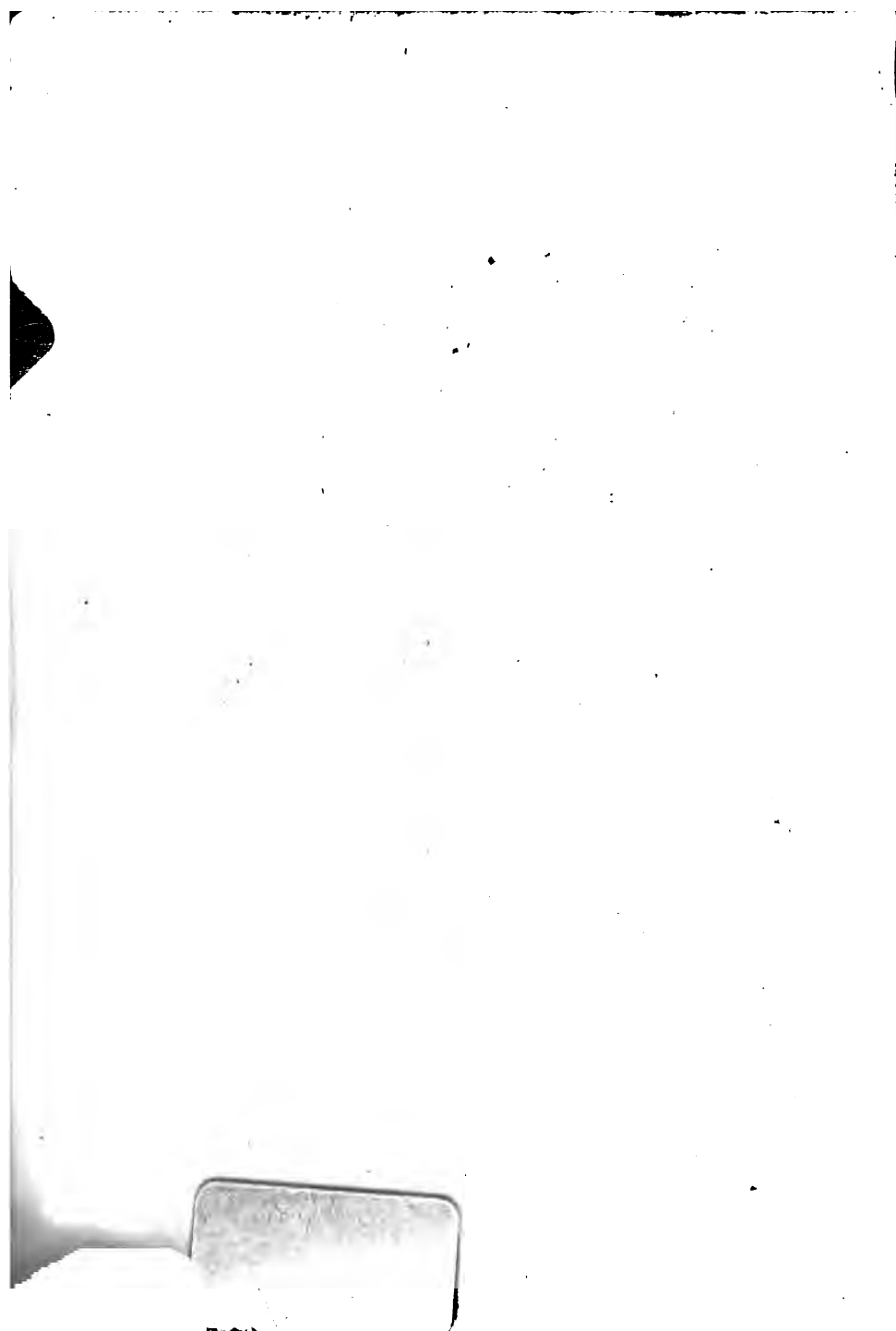


STEPHEN
CALINARI

by

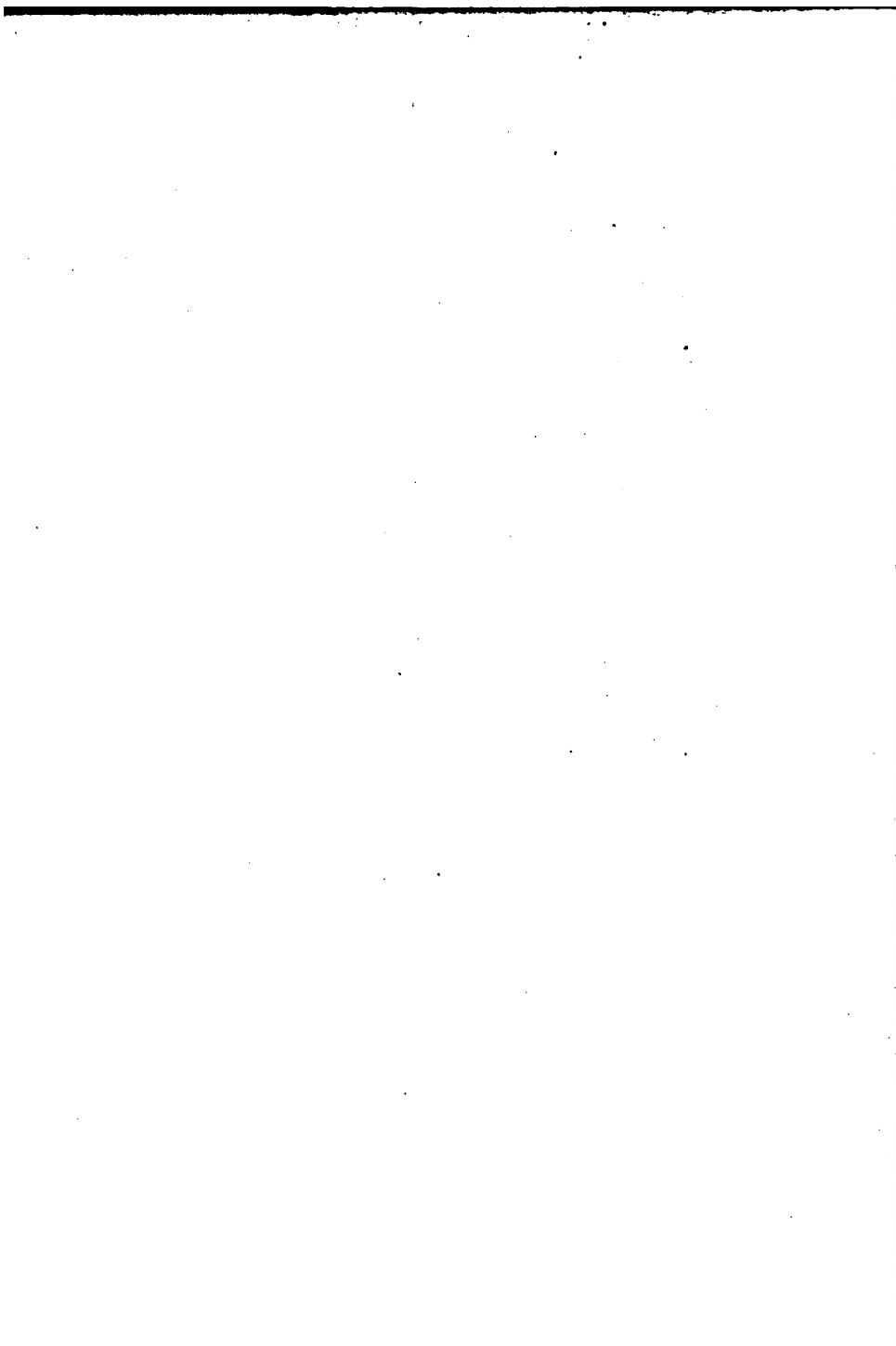
JULIAN
STURGIS



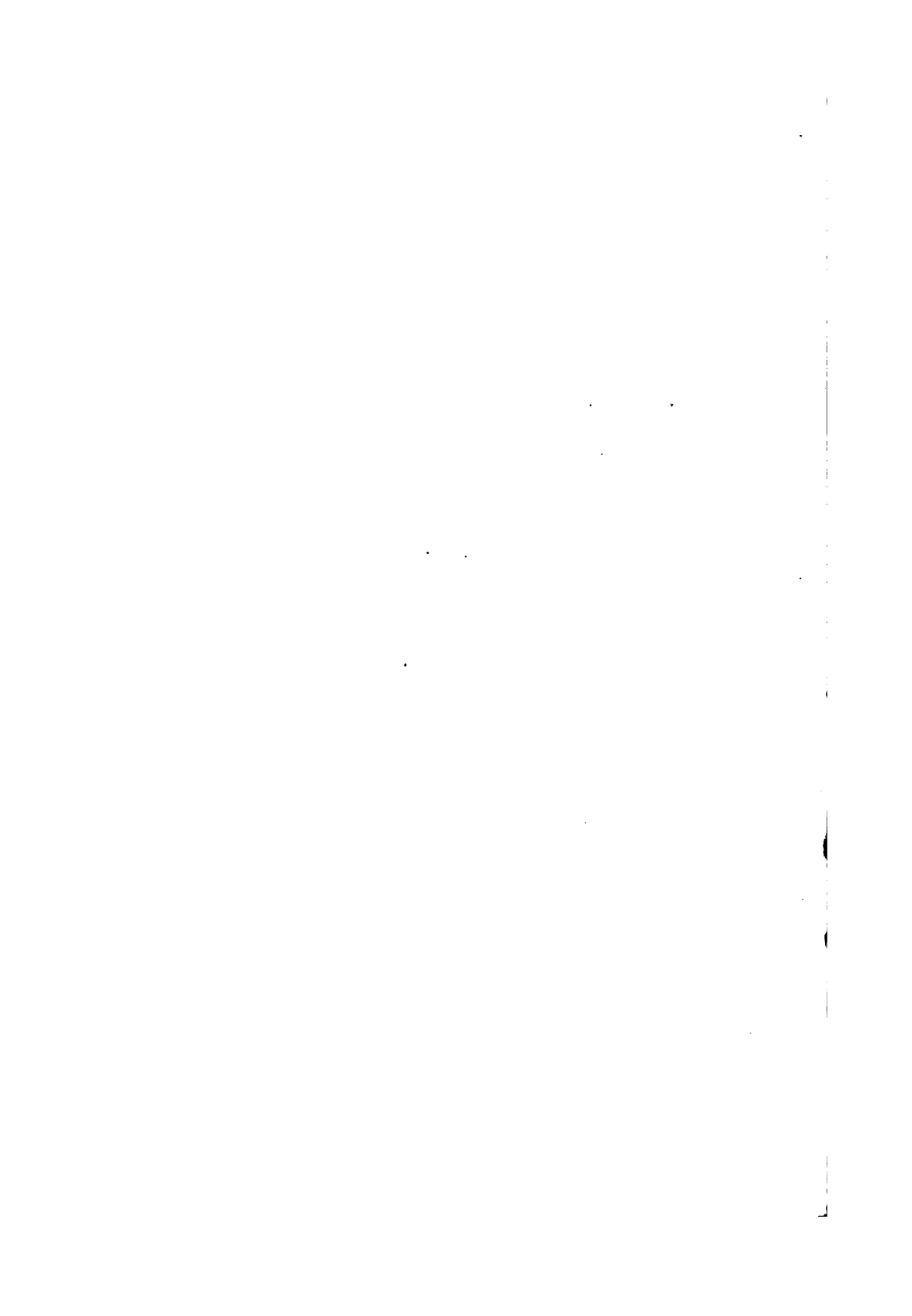




NCW
Sturg



STEPHEN CALINARI



STEPHEN CALINARI

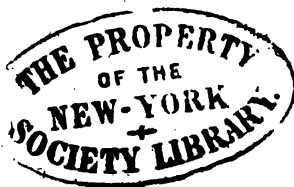
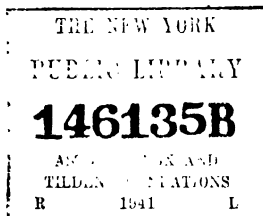
BY

JULIAN STURGIS

1

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
NEW YORK ::::::::::::::: 1901

Go



COPYRIGHT, 1901, BY
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

TROW DIRECTORY
PRINTING AND BOOKBINDING COMPANY
NEW YORK

F

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. In Summer Term	1
II. May Races	8
III. A Supper in College	13
IV. From Studious Cloister	18
V. To the Gay World	25
VI. In the Ballroom	32
VII. This Bud of Love	37
VIII. In Lord Ranmore's Den	46
IX. In the Manner of Watteau	55
X. In the Home of Art	63
XI. A Statesman and a Slum	69
XII. A Proposal	76
XIII. The Wings of the Morning	85
XIV. A Tramp by Day—A Tramp by Night	93
XV. The Coop Family	100
XVI. A Comrade for the Road	106
XVII. A Start for Stamboul	113
XVIII. On the Bosphorus	119

5046

Contents

Chapter	Page
XIX. Daria	129
XX. An Introduction	137
XXI. Above the Swinging Bosphorus	146
XXII. In the House of Moro Bey	154
XXIII. A First Step	162
XXIV. Music of Daria	169
XXV. Goodby	173
XXVI. In the Shipka Pass	183
XXVII. The Dead Man	191
XXVIII. In Fight and Fever	198
XXIX. In the Tent of Moro Bey	203
XXX. Back to the Bosphorus	208
XXXI. A Letter from the Dead	213
XXXII. In Pera	219
XXXIII. On the Shore of Marmora	223
XXXIV. To London	229
XXXV. On Hammersmith Bridge	235
XXXVI. At the Dinner Table	245
XXXVII. With the Coops	252
XXXVIII. In the Garden	259
XXXIX. To the Wedding	267
XL. In Church and After	273
XLI. In Lord Ranmore's Library	281

Contents

Chapter	Page
XLII. In the Hotel Drawing-Room . . .	289
XLIII. In Grandada's Study . . .	299
XLIV. At Rehearsal . . .	311
XLV. In a Grill-Room . . .	318
XLVI. Daria's Discovery . . .	325
XLVII. Chaloner's Den . . .	331
XLVIII. At a Political Meeting . . .	339
XLIX. An Effective Speaker . . .	346
L. In South Acacia Road . . .	355
LI. Letter of a Dean's Wife . . .	363
LII. The Right Way . . .	369
LIII. In the Cathedral City . . .	378
LIV. An End and a Beginning . . .	385

Stephen Calinari

CHAPTER I

IN SUMMER TERM

GREY and green is Oxford in summer, a place of delicate vapours. Low by the river she lies, centre of soft sloping hills, and a light haze seems to float about her towers and pinnacles. A softened sunshine fills to the brim the walled gardens of her ancient colleges. Drowsy is all the air, like the afternoon of the Lotus eaters. The birds, who babbled thick at dawn in the close shrubberies, are silent in this slumbrous afternoon. Moisture and sun have made these shrubberies dense; they push beyond their boundaries out on to the shaven lawns. Somewhat monotonous the green may seem, and the grey; but, since the summer is young, the verdure has innumerable shades, and the grey walls have been touched by time and weather to many tones.

It was one of the first summer days of 1877. Soothed by the sweet air which came to him from the garden close, and by the tiny sounds of a silence which were like the far-off murmur of bees or faintest stir of air in leaves, a big young man lay sleeping by the open window of his room. He was in training, and after the

Stephen Calinari

early dinner of the crew he had yielded to the soft influence of place and hour. He had drawn a deep well-worn armchair to the window and placed himself at ease therein, stretching his long legs to the faded window seat, which had been built by a former resident in the thickness of the ancient wall. There reclining he had looked forth with deep content to the homely green garden of his most ancient College, until his eyes had closed and the young athlete slumbered like a healthy babe. Flaxen-haired, fair but tanned, with his great limbs all lax in sleep and his mouth half-open, he seemed like colossal innocence or the lazy strength of the Saxon. He never sported his oak; he and his rooms lay always open to the world. So it happened that in this unguarded hour he lay under the critical scrutiny of another lad of like years but in all else unlike. Slim, dark and keen, the critic stood in the doorway and examined his friend, not for the first time, with interest, affection and contempt. His quick eyes moved from the recumbent Titan to the familiar pew-ters and more costly prizes of the athlete and to the book-shelves of wide spaces; and then they returned to the sleeper, who showed not a sign of restlessness under the cool inspection. Beyond the placid face of the sleeper was the garden, all placidity. Of learning or of leisure was this scene typical? The dark young man laughed low to himself as he advanced quietly into the room and stood looking down upon his fellow-undergraduate. It was but the siesta of a healthy young giant condemned by the laws of training to a time of inactivity. His sleep was light. He stirred and

In Summer Term

then he moved himself in his big chair; and then his eyes, after blinking cat-like in the sun, opened wide and stared up into his friend's. "Ha!" he cried and sat up. "Ha!"

Stephen struck him playfully on the shoulder, and Harold stood up, shook his great bulk, stretched himself, yawned vastly, and again said, "Ha!"

"You receive me like the war horse," said Stephen crisply; but Harold made no answer. He had gone to the clock on the mantelpiece to see how much time had yet to pass before the evening's race. It was naturally his first thought; for this would be a night of the May Races important to his cherished boat, which had a good chance of going head. With his mind relieved he went back to his seat in the window, pushing his friend, as he passed, with a heavy hand into another armchair.

"You haven't been near me," he then said with an attempt at severity, "since we went into training."

"I've been reading," said Stephen.

Harold laughed. "One of those famous spurts of yours!" he said. "What was it this time—Mill or Mazzini?"

"Talk of what you understand," said the other drily; "of steaks and rhubarb."

This mightily amused the giant youth, who shook his chair with laughter.

"You look fit enough anyway," said Stephen with grudging admiration.

"I'm fit to row for my life," said Harold. "If we catch 'em to-night, we'll go head to a moral. But you

Stephen Calinari

mustn't say I said so: I don't hold with talk of going head: the thing is to do it."

"Really?" asked the other youth with an exaggerated air of indifference.

"You ought to be squelched," said his friend gloomily. "You don't care a hang for the College."

"Not a hang," said Stephen amiably.

"You won't belong to it long, anyway," said Harold, with a regret which he could not keep out of his voice; "the dons can't stand much more of your cheek. How many lectures have you shirked this week?"

"I've been reading: I could not afford to waste my time."

"Reading for the Schools?"

"For my improvement," said Stephen, smiling.

"They won't care a fig about that. They meant you to get a First."

"Really?" asked Stephen. "It's not original," he added presently; "a good many fellows get 'Firsts.' The curse of this country is routine, the prescribed rut. Look at you! There you are, swinging, with your eyes on the back of No. 7 night after night; then Henley with eyes on the same back; then Putney with eyes on the same back. Cut it all and come away with me and take a line of your own."

"Cut the boat!" said Hal with pathetic dismay.

"The fatal thing with you chaps is routine, routine and respect."

"Ha! Respect won't bring you to grief anyway."

"If I succeed," said Stephen after a minute, "it will be because I am free from respect. Respect of elders

In Summer Term

is the paralysis of the young. The young have a chance of clear vision; but in this blessed country they only see what their elders expect them to see, only think what their elders expect them to think. So they too grow into elders who learn nothing with years but to save themselves the trouble of thinking. Listen to the grave talk of your elders and you will hear hashed newspaper."

"What infernal rot you do talk," said Hal with conviction.

"Thank you," said Stephen with a little bow.

"And you are the most conceited chap in the College—and that's saying something!"

"I'm the only man in the College who has the rudiments of self-confidence."

It was indeed to say something to say that Stephen was the most conceited person in the College; for that ancient place was bubbling over with clever young men, and, where men are at once clever and young, there in that happy time shall a delightful vanity prevail. The College expected her undergraduates to do well; even the rowing men were to aim at some form of honours. For eccentricity which interfered with due preparation for the Schools, for neglect of any means whereby a talented youth might confer honour on his College by his personal success, the authorities had small mercy. This the wise young athlete knew, and he looked on his friend now with real regret, fearing that his career might be brought to an abrupt close by his eccentricity. For Stephen was not like the other chaps, as Harold put it to himself. He had not been at a public

Stephen Calinari

school, and was wont to congratulate himself on the fact. What a dangerous attitude of mind! What was to be looked for with certainty from a youth who had been educated partly by a private tutor at home, partly at a school at Geneva? He had been for a year at a German University before coming to Oxford; he spoke foreign languages with a facility positively alarming; and his name was Stephen Calinari. If in spite of all these disadvantages Harold Downton, who had passed calmly from his seat in the Eton eight to a corresponding place in the Oxford boat, sighed over the probable departure of his lively friend, it is proof of a largeness of mind which corresponded with that of his chest and limbs, and which was indeed characteristic of this fine young fellow. He was following a common line of thought, when, gazing with a frown on the mellow scene without, he said presently, "I do wish you had had a decent bringing up."

Stephen had settled himself in the chair, into which his friend had thrust him without ceremony; he lay back regarding him with a faint smile. "It is just what saves me," he said.

"An Englishman should be an English schoolboy first," said Harold, frowning. "After all you are English—of a sort."

"If I am," said Stephen, "it is that I may rule you beef-fed islanders. You are good stuff to guide; but for initiative"—and he finished the sentence with a gesture so foreign, that it stung even Harold to satire.

"Oh, you are going to be prime minister, are you?" he asked with a grin.

In Summer Term

"Quite likely," said Stephen.

Hal looked at him as a big dog may look at a puppy. He liked him and would like to shake him. He had been interested by his story, which he had heard in the first days of their friendship, and yet it seemed unusual, out of order, uncanny. Stephen had told him that his father had been separated from his mother so long ago that he had no recollection of him, that the father had vanished and had died somewhere abroad. Stephen's mother had taken her maiden name and had gone back to live with her father, who was a rich Greek merchant, and it was that name which Stephen bore. Harold had asked him once if he had had no curiosity about his father, and Stephen had answered that all the curiosity of which he was capable was concentrated on himself. He had been content with the knowledge that, since his mother must have been right, his father must have been wrong. There were even connections of his father, people of importance too, who made a point of being always attentive to Mrs. Calinari, as if to show that they did not defend her late husband. As a matter of fact his father had excited Stephen's thoughts to a strangely small degree. It was almost by chance that not long ago he had learned his name; and when Harold in their intimate talk had asked him what it was, it came all unfamiliar from his tongue as "Astley Carr." Harold kept to himself his opinion that it was a great pity that his friend was not called "Carr" instead of that outlandish "Calinari."

Stephen Calinari

CHAPTER II

MAY RACES

IN spite of the cool sarcastic tone which young Calinari had assumed about the College and the College boat, it was he whose heart beat quicker as the two friends walked down to the river in the soft summer evening. Harold seemed phlegmatic, indifferent, as is thought right in a young Briton who is about to display his prowess. He slouched along with downcast eyes; while Stephen, who was not about to compete, walked more briskly and looked about him as if he enjoyed the excitement in the air. He rapped his great companion on the forearm. "You look as if you were going to be hung," he said; "that's English, I suppose? Good form, eh?"

Harold growled softly in answer.

Many young men were moving riverward; and now and then a cheerful voice hailed the stalwart Hal, who was a very popular person. The evening air was moist and still; the shadows of the trees in Christ Church meadows were growing long towards the east; in the pale light before them a gleam of the river was like a little flame. When they reached the bank they came into the midst of bustle, gaiety, the gilded painted barges, the flicker of light flags. It moved Stephen to a sudden emotion, a sudden laughter; he caught the excitement from the air. There are all sorts of ambitions; he was amazed by the eager desire that his boat,

May Races

and Hal therein, should go head; the question of governing the country might be postponed.

At the College barge Hal was absorbed by other members of the crew; and Stephen crossed the river in a full punt and walked alone down the opposite bank. He often walked alone, partly because he was much interested by himself, partly because he had not many friends. The average undergraduate did not know what to make of him, as the phrase is; and the average undergraduate does not take the trouble to understand the companion who is not readily classified. Stephen was handsome in a brilliant fashion, and his looks had won him goodwill in a society much influenced by looks. On the other hand no freshman had ever appeared so cool, so unembarrassed, and he was presently suspected of sarcasm. He looked coldly, if not contemptuously, on bear fighting and the favourite humorous sallies of his time. He was respected as a man who had been much abroad, and was probably a man of the world; this is a reputation which inspired awe, if scant affection, in the undergraduate of that time. A story was current, a story with no grain of truth, that he had been in love with an Italian countess and that his cynical air was due to this unhappy passion. The other boys did not like his cynicism. Even now there were some who, seeing him on the river bank, were surprised; they had thought that he would not care to share the common excitement. And this was a night of excitement. If they made their bump that night, the boat would probably go head. This was the critical night, the time for a supreme effort. As Stephen walked

Stephen Calinari

down the bank and took up a position just above the famous Gut, he was victim of an excitement which would have surprised his critics, which even surprised himself. He laid his slim fingers on his pulse in wonder.

The fateful moment drew near. Further down the river, close to the shore, lay boat beyond boat with no great spaces between. Five minutes more and the desperate racing would begin. A minute passed, and then another, the slowest minutes in the world. Hal at No. 5 played noiselessly on the handle of his oar and pressed his feet against the stretcher. The boat lay just far enough from the bank to allow room for the stroke-side oars. She was pointing a little too much across the stream. "Ticherupbowsir!" said the deputy waterman, the boat-cad, from the shore; and bow rowed a stroke to straighten her. Then all were forward; it was the last minute, the slim boats strained like greyhounds in the leash. A pistol shot and the blades drove the water with a short stroke, and then reaching out and swinging free the young oarsmen made the boat leap like life. Hoarse roar of voices arose and there was the trampling of running feet. Stephen, from his place higher up the stream, leaned forward, watching for the coming boats. It was a breathless space. Now came the first boat leaping into sight, steady in the smooth untroubled water, and the wet blades caught the low sunlight as she slanted across the Gut. Then the second boat, rowing faster but not gaining, and herself—yes, clearly the third boat had gained upon her. A fear shot through Stephen, for this third boat was the

May Races

enemy, the destined victim, and his quick accurate eye saw that she might make her bump before his boat had a chance of catching her. He felt the boat his, Hal's, the boat of all the College, and he broke into a cry as she came swinging in pursuit. Had she gained? Hal had told him that the enemy were quick starters. What if they should catch the second boat before length and strength had time to tell. For these leading boats the course was so short. Stephen yelled. The boat was going well. As she came abreast of him he could see Hal, lively and strong, reaching far out and rowing clean, his hands coming from his chest like lightning. "Look at old Hal!" screamed a panting runner in his ear; "he's rowing half the boat."

Stephen turned and ran, shouting like a schoolboy. Now, above the Gut, was the place for their effort. Stroke quickened, but the stroke of the enemy answered and gained visibly on the second boat. It was as if they were driving them to an un hoped victory. But the spurt of the enemy died away, and slowly and steadily our boat drew nearer.

"Hal, Hal!" screamed Stephen, totally unheard amid the roar. There was not half a length of daylight between the boats. A rattle was sprung, and stroke quickened at the sound. But the gallant young stroke before them quickened even more, and for a moment it looked as if he would go right up to the boat before him. But that boat also quickened, though in scrambly fashion; and now not a quarter of a length divided us from our prize. She leapt like a hound on the hare. Howls and screams and the hoarse rattle, and she was

Stephen Calinari

almost up with her. The steerer pulled a string, but a foot too soon; she crossed the enemy's stern without a touch. Surely it was the last chance. As the steerer, pale as death, straightened her again, he could see how much way he had lost by his mistake, his impatience. And the stroke of the escaping crew, quickened again, and again it seemed as if he would catch the scrambling crew who were rowing desperately for life. But the race was nearly done. They were passing the barges. Was it still possible? Our stroke quickened no more, but he and every man behind him was rowing with all his might; they had kept their form, and form told. Slowly they diminished the space. From the barges, as from the opposite shore, came cries and shouts. Stephen, panting, hustled, demoralised, had his eyes on Hal, still rowing long and quick, driving a wave of water before his blade. And now stroke quickened for a finish, and like a flash the boat again went up. The second boat had staggered past the post just safe; but the third, not five yards from the end, was caught, stabbed as by a darting sword-fish. The pale steerer caught his breath with a sob. If she had lost her bump through his fault! Hal, the effort over, sat slouching over his oar, and grinned amiably at Stephen on the shore. Stephen, suddenly conscious of his absurd state of heat and excitement, broke into a scornful laugh in the midst of the howling undergraduates around him.

A Supper in College

CHAPTER III

A SUPPER IN COLLEGE

STEPHEN tingled with amazement, not without shame. He had meant to cast a cool observant glance at the striving crews; he had come shrieking and stumbling up the bank like a lunatic or a boy. A saving humour rescued him from the depths of self-contempt. Even in those early days an intermittent sense of humour saved him now and then from making himself ridiculous. As he gradually grew cool in mind and body he laughed at himself for his enthusiasm; and when he next met Hal, deeply content with the crew's performance, he assailed him with some light shafts of sarcasm. But his great friend only smiled upon him with the utmost kindness; he had seen him in the last moments of his weakness, and his heart warmed to him at the recollection. He saw him still flushed, tumbled, ecstatic, and forgave the succeeding chill. He thought Stephen almost unnaturally clever, and put down all his eccentricities to this cleverness, which was dangerous unless balanced by other more British qualities. Clever fellows were apt to have fads, especially clever fellows who had not had the nonsense taken out of them at public schools; and Stephen's dominant fad, as his large tolerant friend well knew, was to despise Oxford, and with it all the common interests of Oxford, and among them the fortunes of the College boat. So Harold, strong in silence, irritated his friend by hu-

Stephen Calinari

wide open to the Quad. Hal sang his expected song, caring not a jot for the contemptuous look of Stephen who grew colder in the growing heat. Hal had dragged his friend into this casual gathering of athletes relaxed from strenuous discipline, who to his critical ears seemed bellowing like young bulls irrational. He was out of sympathy with the convivial scene. If he had gone mad at the crisis of conflict he was the more sane now. Wine was spilt upon the table; bread and fruit hurtled through the air and from the windows to friends below; active hostility and affection somewhat mandolin seemed the prevailing moods of the triumphant hour.

Just opposite to Stephen sat No. 4 of the crew, by name Bulpet, a devoted henchman of the gallant Harold, by nature excellent if slow of wits, but at times excited by unusual wine to a dull ferocity. Gradually his blood-shot eye became fascinated by Stephen's sarcastic smile; it was his standing wonder how Hal could stand that fellow; now he was warmed slowly to a deep hostility. For some time the rage of Bulpet only muttered and grumbled, like thunder in the distance. Then he began to comment right and left on the supercilious air of their distinguished guest. Then across the table were launched direct if clumsy bolts of humour which, barely heard amid the din, were answered only by a smile yet more sarcastic. And din it was; for several songsters were giving each his favourite song, while others less musical contributed the howls and cries of savages. Din and heated air and the sight of that cool disdainful face worked on the glowing Bulpet like bel-

Stephen Calinari

mourning his attitude as if unworthy of attack; and he laughed at the little darts of his sarcasm as if they tickled him.

Though Stephen said more than once that he should see no more of the racing, yet each evening, when the fateful hour drew near, the spirit in his feet drew him reluctant to the shore. He went with a curled lip, as if it were a matter so small as to be unworthy of even the smallest effort to keep away. He could trust himself to preserve a calmer, a more dignified attitude. Indeed the incitement to enthusiasm was less strong. On the next night the victory was too lightly won. They bumped the second boat before the Gut; and the cool critic of their prowess was able to stroll up the bank with an air of sufficient indifference. But on the evening that followed there was no victory at all; and Stephen with ineffectual rage saw his crew row over without even an attempt at a bump. The gruesome rattle never sounded. Stephen felt a wave of scorn for the crew of his College, for the muscles of Harold, but above all for his own disgust. The head boat rowing in smooth water, and called upon for the first time to exert themselves, showed more pace than the riverside critics had thought possible; they reached the goal clean, clear and jubilant and, as it seemed to their partisans, with strength and speed to spare. Sporting youngsters backed them to keep the pride of the place. For now only the last night of the racing remained, only one more struggle of the hunted to escape, only one more desperate effort of the pursuer.

Stephen on the shore felt empty, almost sick, as he

A Supper in College

waited. Again, as the roar came from below and the rush of trampling feet, he saw the head boat come into view, rowing so clean and strong that a groan broke from him. Then he saw his own crew. They were rowing a quicker stroke than ever before, a stroke so quick that it was hard for the big men in the middle of the boat to use their length and strength as they should. Hal's famous back had lost some of its wonted majesty, but he was rowing with the utmost force and dash, and all the crew were with him; from stem to stern they rowed with a life and vigour which they had never shown before. Stephen's tongue was dry in his mouth; he could not cry out; his heart was thumping as he turned to run. Could they do it? Just below the barges stroke quickened yet more; the crew curled up and rowed as for their lives; they dashed up, devouring the space between; inch by inch the water between stern and bow grew less, till with a final leap they were into her not ten yards from the goal.

That night the College went temporarily mad. It was a sober college, as colleges went in those days, a working college of somewhat excessive self-respect, or so some out-college men were reported to have said; but on that glorious evening the undergraduates of this sober self-respecting institution gave themselves to howls and cries discordant, to impromptu wines in each other's rooms, to horseplay and bear fighting of a most childish kind. The crew went out of training with a roar. They supped together, bringing in a few dear friends to share their revelry, singing and shouting and conversing with all their admirers through windows

Stephen Calinari

wide open to the Quad. Hal sang his expected song, caring not a jot for the contemptuous look of Stephen, who grew colder in the growing heat. Hal had dragged his friend into this casual gathering of athletes, relaxed from strenuous discipline, who to his critical ears seemed bellowing like young bulls irrational. He was out of sympathy with the convivial scene. If he had gone mad at the crisis of conflict he was the more sane now. Wine was spilt upon the table; bread and fruit hurtled through the air and from the windows to friends below; active hostility and affection somewhat maudlin seemed the prevailing moods of the triumphant hour.

Just opposite to Stephen sat No. 4 of the crew, by name Bulpet, a devoted henchman of the gallant Harold, by nature excellent if slow of wits, but at times excited by unusual wine to a dull ferocity. Gradually his blood-shot eye became fascinated by Stephen's sarcastic smile; it was his standing wonder how Hal could stand that fellow; now he was warmed slowly to a deep hostility. For some time the rage of Bulpet only muttered and grumbled, like thunder in the distance. Then he began to comment right and left on the supercilious air of their distinguished guest. Then across the table were launched direct if clumsy bolts of humour which, barely heard amid the din, were answered only by a smile yet more sarcastic. And din it was; for several songsters were giving each his favourite song, while others less musical contributed the howls and cries of savages. Din and heated air and the sight of that cool disdainful face worked on the glowing Bulpet like bel-

A Supper in College

lows on a sluggish furnace. He bellowed across the table, he rose in his place. "Let's hustle Hal's furriner," he roared, and two or three of those nearest to him stumbled also to their feet. Bulpet sprang upon the table to fling himself on Stephen, and the next moment stood stock still with his mouth open looking into the shining barrels of a revolver. Stephen was standing on his chair with the pistol in his hand. An absolute hush possessed the room and blank amazement. Unprecedented, unpardonable, un-English! At no Oxford wine party in any generation had such a thing been seen or even imagined. The young islanders, like sheep at bay, stared at this little dog who threatened barking, with amazement turning slowly into disgust. Before the ominous silence broke into more angry storm Harold had grasped the situation and his amazing friend. Flinging one arm round Stephen he put his large hand over the little threatening rings of the revolver, while with the other hand he thrust the aggressive Bulpet backward off the table on to prostrate chairs and comrades. He felt some of the confidence which came to the old lady when the cork was inserted into the gun; he did not believe for a moment that Stephen would shoot, and certainly not through his friendly restraining palm. He only let go of the pistol that he might take a firmer hold of his friend, and so caught him up and carried him out into the open air. Stephen never struggled where struggle was vain: he submitted, and was borne from the scene of riot like a babe.

Stephen Calinari

CHAPTER IV

FROM STUDIOUS CLOISTER

ON the fair morning which followed the festal night, there was the usual come and go of boys in Quad. They came forth from staircases into the fresh air, sauntered on to the grass beneath the old elm trees, hailed each other by strange names like schoolboys. Others leaned, lounging or smoking from the wide-open windows to the promise of the day. A little incense of tobacco smoke floated up to the small clouds, which dappled the pale blue like fleeces of the sky. As Hal came striding from his rooms into the air with an unusual weight of care upon his massive brow, he was hailed by this one and that from doorway or from window and by groups beneath the trees. The same subject stirred the quick minds of all the youth. All liked Hal. All, who were sufficiently intimate, liked to hail him by his brief familiar name and liked to be heard as they hailed him. He was a great hero in the place. On this morning all the youth, close or far in friendship, wanted his opinion of the amazing fact of last night. They were sorry for him on account of his strange friend's conduct; but yet they held him in some sort responsible. This came of making friends who were unlike other fellows; there was a little jealousy in this. And, if they wished to hear their hero's opinions, they wished to speak also. Their views varied, but all were more or less condemnatory. Some made light of

From Studious Cloister

the matter, calling the pistol a toy and its appearance a silly jest; but most of them liked it large. It brought a touch of romance, of adventure, even of danger into their guarded peaceful academic life. Not a few, even while their tongues condemned, began to think of practising with revolvers, a thought which set other thoughts flying to the wild places of the world—the Indian frontier, the centre of Africa, the dazzling peaks of the Rocky Mountains. The adventurer stirred within them, as in so many English boys. From Hal they got small satisfaction. He had come forth with a purpose; and he put the most insistent of them aside with a large hand, as he strode upon his way.

As for the cause of the pother, he sat at breakfast. He was neither later nor earlier than usual. His coolness would have exasperated his critics. The normal College breakfast was never to Stephen's taste; and if he now ate but little and with a somewhat delicate air, his fastidiousness was not due to the riot of the night before. He felt sure that Harold would come to him and smiled as he foretold to himself the words of wisdom which this sensible young giant would say to him.

Indeed as Harold crossed the Quad, silent among the babblers, he was bearing a weightier burden of responsibility. He rehearsed to himself, as he came, some sentences which he felt bound to say to his friend even at the risk of his displeasure. To find Stephen seated at breakfast and looking just as usual raised half the load from Harold's mind. He seated himself in the armchair and contemplated the puzzling youth.

"Well?" said Stephen presently, "begin!"

Stephen Calinari

"It was bad form," said Hal bluntly. It was the first sentence which he had made ready as he came.

Stephen laughed his light provoking laugh. "It wasn't loaded," he said.

"Then it was worse form," said Harold bluntly, "so beastly theatrical."

"It answered its purpose anyway."

"Do you always carry that rotten little thing?" asked Harold after a pause, his honest face puckered with disgust.

"I'm not a giant," said Stephen coolly; "and I object to being mauled. However," he added after a minute, "my pistol and I will trouble you no more. I'm going down."

"Going down!" echoed Harold with a blank face; "for the rest of term?"

"For good and all."

"Oh, don't do that!" said Harold sitting up in his chair with lively dismay. All his premeditated scolding had vanished into thin air.

"You are the only man who'll care even a little; and I'm doing no good here. It's waste of time."

"Oh, you've lots of time. You can't stand for places yet. And you can get a first in Greats, if you try. All the Dons say so."

"Even if I did," said Stephen, "it makes not a penn'orth of difference nowadays. Nobody knows now what class a public man took till they publish his obituary notice; and then they don't care." He had ceased to dally with breakfast, and he now lighted a very small cigarette. "A statesman out of office," he continued,

From Studious Cloister

"is no longer expected to publish yet another translation of Homer or Horace." He indulged himself with a mere breath of tobacco and tossed the remnant of the diminutive cigarette into the empty grate. "I am all wrong here," he said; "and it's good sense to acknowledge it. I might take some interest in philosophy, but I don't want to. In moments of depression, I might fancy myself a mere effect of forces, an obscure bolt in the machine, murmur 'Kismet' or 'Sociology' and sit like a Turk or a cat."

"Oh, that's all rot and you know it," said Harold crossly.

"But it's rot that might paralyse one when action was needed. Instead of seizing one's chance one might let the moment go and console oneself with the airs of a philosopher."

Harold sat gloomily regarding his own feet. "I hate your going," he said at last with his most surly manner.

"Dear old chap!" said Stephen almost tenderly. "Look here," he said presently; "you chuck it too! Come out with me and study the Eastern Question on the spot."

"Mel The Eastern Question."

"You are not a fool," said Stephen, "for all your brawn. All you want is to get out of the groove and give up wagging backwards and forwards in a boat like an enormous pendulum."

Harold laughed but without mirth. "There's Henley," he said; "and then Putney next year. After that I might cut it—but I shan't. Rowing is better than rotting about in the Levant."

Stephen Calinari

"I shall rot about in the Levant," said Stephen; "and then I shall come home and marry Lotty or Elfrida and stand for the division of Limeshire where their father's interest is strong. I forget at the moment which division it is, and I forget at the moment whether it is Elfrida or Lotty that I admire most."

Harold was not amused. He continued to regard his feet. "And you really mean to cut the College?" he asked woefully.

"Yes. I'm going to see the Head in ten minutes," said Stephen, and he looked at his watch, which lay on the breakfast table beside his plate.

"He'll make it hot for you," said Harold with some satisfaction in his morose tone.

Stephen laughed lightly. He was one of the few undergraduates who had no latent fear of the Head of the College.

Yet half an hour had not passed and gone before Stephen Calinari had been worsted by the Head, as many another had been worsted before him. Stephen, full of matter and eager for speech, had been ushered into the cool bare spacious study where the Head sat writing. Perhaps it was a sign of a certain disturbance, an unusual nervousness in this self-possessed undergraduate, that he began to talk with excessive volubility. Had he been as wholly at his ease as he was wont to be, he would have trimmed his egoism more neatly; there was something crude, of which he was disagreeably conscious, in the flow of sentences all about himself, his past and his future. He was discontented with his performance; he seemed to himself to be explaining

From Studious Cloister

with little fineness to the Head that his famous Educational Establishment was not adequate to the needs of so remarkable a youth as himself. It is likely that the Head was not pleased. In the midst of the young man's speech he rose from his chair and went and stood with his elbow on the mantelpiece and his little square-toed shoe on the fender. Stephen, regarding his soft profile, wished that he could guess in what way he was impressing him. Indeed this eminent man was hard to read at that, perhaps at any, angle. His pink soft face, which was like clay unfinished by the sculptor, made an effective contrast with the silvery white hair, which adorned the square solid head; it seemed to promise ease and benevolence. The plump figure also and the little round waistcoat, which the dress coat, which he always wore, showed to the best advantage, were surely signs of an unruffled amiability. He might have been a little benevolent intelligent gentleman, such as Dickens drew, meditating kindly acts and Christmas pudding. But tradition and experience both whispered in the ear of the audacious Calinari, even as his tongue ran glibly, that there were other sides to this prosperous little gentleman; and that his embarrassing silence was itself ominous of ill. The youth faltered in his easy speech; he paused for comment and none came; he began again, and was the more pert perhaps for the effort to stifle his growing uneasiness. At last conscious that his language was less and less effective, he stopped short. Still the little gentleman by the fireplace seemed to be rapt in contemplation of his own little square-toed shoe and the little piece of bluish knitted sock

Stephen Calinari

which was visible between the shoe and the black trouser. Still he stood sideways and gave small chance of reading his soft enigmatic countenance. Stephen perceiving with impatience that his chief might be considering his case, or a difficult passage in the "Phaedrus," or the price of vegetables as supplied to the College kitchen, found this characteristic silence intolerable. He was obliged to speak and he spoke with unconcealed irritation. "Anyway," he said sharply, "I'm doing no good here."

The little gentleman did not even shift his shoe from the fender. In a clear passionless high tone he said, "You will do no good anywhere."

It was like the chant of a little rosy choirboy; but it stung the youth to fury. He made for the door with his teeth tight clenched. But unluckily for him a quick temptation to further speech seized him. With his hand on the handle he turned; the clenched teeth parted and with concentrated bitterness he spoke. "If," said he, "I were going to be a duke or the Ireland scholar, you would take some interest in my—my career."

Clear and high came the answer, brief and clear—"Yes."

Then the great little man returned to his desk and his notebooks, and, Stephen vanished from the room and rushed down the stairs stung, furious, yet laughing. In the Quad was Harold waiting anxiously. Stephen laughed louder at his melancholy face. "He has scored again," he said; "he always scores."

To the Gay World

CHAPTER V

TO THE GAY WORLD

WHEN Stephen's mother resumed her maiden name of "Calinari" and thus emphasized the fact that she repudiated the husband who had deserted her, she received a great deal of easy sympathy and pity from the world, or from such part of the world as knew of her existence. Even a Benjamin's portion of kindness came to her from the relations and connections of her husband himself. Not one of them defended him. He had behaved ill, in a manner connected with cards and clubs, which even now clubmen and card-players will not pardon; and the word went round (it was mentioned often as the opinion of the duke) that Mrs. Calinari had been very badly treated, and that everything should be done to make up to her for her husband's bad conduct. Thus it happened that to Mrs. Calinari her great misfortune was the beginning of her social success. Conscientiously, if calmly, she lamented her lot, as she was bound to do. She sighed, more and more comfortably, over the disappearance of the husband who had puzzled her, vexed her and shaken her from her delightful calm. She accepted with an admirable air, with quiet gratitude and without a trace of servility, the attentions which the erring man's relations made haste to offer. They had liked her from the first; they had wondered how she came by that placid air of distinction; they had wondered at the luck of

Stephen Calinari

their brilliant but disturbing relative in annexing an heiress who was at once rich and presentable. But after all the married life of these two ill-connected persons had been so short, that some of the more important of his people had barely made her acquaintance when the separation took place. Then there was a general feeling that they should do what they could for this handsome peaceful lady, who had not thrust herself upon them; and when the duke had dropped his brief but pregnant remark about making it up to her, there was even a mild rivalry in hurrying with the best oil and wine, with the *cuisine à l'huile* when the oil was at its freshest, with the vin de Bordeaux of the year now best for drinking. They asked her to all their parties. She did them no discredit, and she liked it. Too lazy as well as too proud to court them, she received their invitations and their half-audible murmurs of kind feeling with sincere pleasure. She was passive, gentle, kindly, comfortable, and not a little wise. She was tall and shapely too, moon-faced and fair, always well dressed but not aggressively; restful, responsive, intelligent, but not too tiresomely clever. She liked to listen, and she smiled when men talked—smiled sympathetically when one of them talked about himself. She had the best tea in London, and made it well. She said that she liked her visitors to smoke, but she smoked herself only in the strictest privacy. She was spoken well of by both men and women. "Madam Cally," as it became the fashion in that set to call her, was a popular person, and in course of time a personage. She was handsome, and yet aroused no anxiety in her

To the Gay World

sex. Even the most jealous women felt that she cared little for men, though she liked to give them tea. Good wives, who gave thought to finding occupation for their leisured lords, sent them to tea with this soothing charming woman. She saw them come and go with equal pleasure. Indeed she had loved her husband with all the emotion of which she was capable, but he had exhausted it early; it was by no means profound. She had imagined herself deeply in love with this brilliant being who had come wooing from houses which she had never entered, but an undeniable sense of peace settled dove-like on her soul when the door had closed behind him for the last time. She was sorry and ashamed but relieved. The mere idea of entangling her peaceful life with another man was distasteful to her. She liked her romance done for her. She sat contemplative, like a woman at a play, quietly interested in the romances of other women. Indeed as a spectator she fed her fancy with a certain lavishness, pleased to believe in the emotions of all the people who came about her—to see deep meaning in the glance which Lady Chalmers shot at Sir Percy Ashe, or to read with her mind's eye the letter which little Mrs. Fox slipped into the pillar box at the corner. She lisped over these little romances, speaking softly with the lips and with the most amiable of smiles. There was hardly one of her husband's connections, or of the friends of those connections whom she did not fancy as a victim of romance, or at least the object of a tender, if concealed, affection. This was the era of three volume novels, and three volume novels were around this kind lady in

Stephen Calinari

solution; she derived a great deal of pleasure from the pleasant passing show. She never wished to play a part herself, to be the heroine of anything disturbing. Peaceful and contemplative, she was a far happier woman after the misfortune which ruined her life.

Naturally, as time passed, Mrs. Calinari began to entertain the folk who had been entertaining her. Intimates still dropped in to tea, but more came to dine, and many more to parties which were pronounced to be completely successful. "Madam Cally," the world said in its terse expressive language, "really did you thundering well." Indeed her father, to whom she had returned after her brief married life, had a fine house and a good cellar, and paid all bills without a murmur. He too enjoyed his injured daughter's success, and liked to entertain the people whose names were in the fashionable papers. The bright-eyed little gentleman struck observers as remarkably simple for a man who had made so much money. He was as fond of his daughter as he had been of his wife, whom she resembled; and for his grandson Stephen he had a warm affection combined with respect for the great man who was to be. His bright dark eyes grew brighter as he gazed on the boy, and saw him in the future the ideal English gentleman, whom he revered, endowed moreover with a cleverness which he never expected from his ideal English gentleman. There were those who said of Mr. Calinari that he descended from Odysseus, and others who maintained that he had been a donkey boy at Cairo, and later a dragoman of tourists. Both tales may have been true, but neither was endorsed by the

To the Gay World

little financier himself, who was neither rude nor servile, but always alert, agreeable, and only more attentive than the more silent men who trod his Eastern carpets.

Stephen, journeying from Oxford by an evening train, thought sometimes of his little dark grandfather, in whose London house he was so sure of welcome; more often of the tall fair mother who would open calm grey eyes at his unexpected appearance, but most often of himself and of the world which lay before him. Life called him. He had shaken off the grey dust of Oxford. He was flying in a flying train to the changes and chances which fired his imagination. He sat in his corner seat, a young man seeing visions, and smiles came unbidden to his lips. He saw a vision of the Head of the college who would feel surprise but show none at his abrupt departure. "Foolish fellow!" he would say in his high way, or some such words, and treat the escapade as unimportant. And yet Stephen felt that for once he had scored off this potentate, who had scored so smartly off him; he would like to see that soft enigmatic face in the very moment when news came that one of the flock had leapt the fence. He seemed to see also his big friend Harold with a kind puzzled face, thinking over his oddities, silently lamenting his departure with the comfort of a pipe, which could be turned to freely in this pause between trainings. He saw other things and people; his heart was a little soft, and yet he was eager as a young hound. He scented life, he was confident of victories. Life called him, insistent as the sea calls the Venetian in the locked

Stephen Calinari

lagoons. He leaned back luxurious in the padded corner, for he was rather tired. He had spent the day in packing all his books and clothes; it had pleased him to leave nothing, to prove to himself that he had gone from the University for ever. He had jumped clean out of the middle ages almost into the future. The spires and towers might dream by Thames, but a dream only would they be for him. Manchester was more in his line or little Downing Street. With such thoughts he was leaning forward again, gazing into the darkness flecked with sparks. He could see a cluster of distant lights; it was one of many lighted places, and in not one of them was he known. Young men were there, full of hopes and fears, and he would never know them. It seemed sad that men should be born and die in those places, not knowing that he, Stephen Calinari, breathed in the same world. A strange pathos touched him at the thought of strangers who would never feel his influence. "A world-wide reputation" was the phrase, but it was only a phrase. He could not hope to affect these people whose lights he could see from the train; and beyond them in the far corners of the world lay tribes and peoples who would never even hear his name. Well, at least he was moving, he was young, and that very night he had begun. The train was flying—life lay before him and the wonders of life.

From Paddington he drove straight home, eager to embrace his mother, smiling as he imagined her face when he told her that he had left Oxford for ever. He was in a hurry to reach home, but even before he reached the corner of the street the four-wheeler

To the Gay World

stopped with a jerk; it was in a string of carriages; already a landau with a big pair of horses had drawn up behind it. Stephen appealed to a policeman, who informed him that all these vehicles were bound for Mr. Calinari's house. What a check to his eagerness! He laughed as he crawled forward to his grandfather's door. At last he drew near to it. There was a path of brilliant light across the pavement, bounded on either side by black rows of still spectators, rank behind rank; and through these critics of the pavement, respectable citizens standing orderly at a show, fashionable ladies walked sedately into the brilliant hall. Then, in its turn, drew up the old cab loaded with luggage, and out stepped young Stephen, feeling shabby and almost shy and yet enjoying the situation. There seemed to be a crowd of hired footmen all in black silk stockings, and all beholding him with amazement, powerless before so unexpected a complication; but incontinently he espied in the background the familiar face of the family butler, who, rapidly explaining that "our young gentleman" had come home, had the cabman paid and the luggage in a corner of the hall before the dowager in the next vehicle had had time to summon more than half a dozen of those imagined accidents which nightly chequered her pursuit of pleasure with a thousand anxieties. She almost felt the pole of the pursuing carriage in her back; but the youth, the cause of her delay, fled before her, and seizing his own portmanteau vanished through a door on the right and hurried up the back stairs, while the more brilliantly attired guests passed with less excitement up the principal staircase.

Stephen Calinari

CHAPTER VI

IN THE BALLROOM

STEPHEN was amused at his home-coming. He liked quick changes; and he thought of the old dark staircases of his College while handily and with skilful pats and pulls he got himself into the dress clothes, which showed the creases of disuse. He tied his tie with care, looking keenly the while at the bright face which from the glass looked so boldly back at him. This sudden plunge was fun; this was the zest of the unexpected. It was a boyish thought to run down the back stairs again, and to come up in the pushing pausing stream which mounted the great staircase. He gave his name, as if he were a stranger, and saw the mildly welcoming smile of his mother slowly fade from her face as it turned on him. Then she smiled anew in a different manner. "Steenie!" she said softly, with round eyes.

"Well, Beloved?" he asked by way of answer, and he kissed her cheek.

This meeting of mother and son made a little boulder, as it were, in the flowing social tide; but Mrs. Calinari pressed her boy a little backward at her side, while she received her next guests. "I've left Oxford," said Stephen in her ear.

"Oh!" she said in a deep full voice, while she shook hands with a minister from South America; and "why?" she added as the Plenipotentiary moved on

In the Ballroom

into the rooms. Then, for he did not answer, she found time to turn her head and let her kind eyes scan him slowly from head to heel. "I don't like your socks," she said.

Stephen looked down at his feet. "I'll change them," said he, and pressing her left hand for a moment he slipped from her side and ran up the next flight of stairs to his bedroom.

When Stephen returned to his mother he found that the ascending people were now rare. Belated folk were still coming, but their hostess could give more attention to her son. She looked him over again from face to socks and expressed her approval only by a smile. "When are you going back to Oxford?" she asked.

"Never," said Stephen.

"Oh!" It was the mildest surprise breathed softly in that full contralto voice.

Stephen had answered the question about his abandoned university with an absent air. His eyes were roaming everywhere. "Beloved," he asked, "do you often sweep them in like this?"

"This is small," she said; "they will dance later. Have you forgotten your dancing?"

"Where's grandada?" asked Stephen.

"With the Princess of Saxe-Baden," she answered. "She has only just arrived in England, and grandada is in attendance." Both mother and son smiled frankly at each other. It was a familiar thought which they shared, that Mr. Calinari had a childlike trust in princes, a peculiar devotion to princesses.

"He will ask leave to present you, when he sees

Stephen Calinari

you," she added. "He will be so glad to see you. Go into the rooms! You must not be tied here to my apron strings."

Then Stephen looked at his mother with frank pleasure. "I like the strings," he said. If strings there were, they were hidden from male eyes, used only in the mysterious fashion of the time for the tying back of the long skirt of the gown. The handsome figure of Mrs. Calinari was shown to great advantage by a fashion which with characteristic taste she pushed to no extreme. The skirt, fitting closely in front, curled in a sinuous tail on the floor behind her. The body of the gown cut low and square in front and back was held on the shoulders by bands which left the full length of the beautiful white arms for the admiration of the world. Very handsome she looked in the eyes of her son, and distinguished without effort, of a natural stateliness. Stephen smiled upon her with frank joy, pleased for her and for himself. She was a mother to do credit to any youth, however critical.

It was often said, and denied only by the most cross-grained and paradoxical, that the "best people" went to Madam Calinari; and it was that Society which is called "best" that lay open to the keen appreciative eyes of Stephen in his mother's drawing rooms. Perhaps his eyes were not so keen as usual, a little dazzled by the white and gold, by glitter of innumerable candles and flash of diamonds. He was a little bemused. A phrase which he had read in some French book of the return of a young man after sojourn in Africa to the region of the *épaules blanches* buzzed in

In the Ballroom

his ears. To him it was no return, but a new atmosphere in which were faintly heard perhaps the voices of the sirens. The white shoulders, the movement, the tinkling laughter and light babble of talk pleased but surprised him. It meant frivolity, but in what degree, he wondered. It was a question not easy to answer.

In the days before the fall of the third Napoleon the brilliant people of his Court would express their artless wonder at the scandals which became public in England. A married couple who pretended to *ton* in Imperial Paris, if they wearied of each other, did not separate with vulgar outcry and journalistic hubbub; they continued to appear together on state occasions or where family affairs required, and for the rest lived apart but with the decorum of a single roof. The apartments of the fashionable husband were on this side and those of his lady wife were on that. The gentleman offered to the world the spectacle of a sublime indifference though a series of lovers were credited to the wife; and his wife, if in the street or at the play she beheld her husband with a lady of whose existence she remained officially ignorant, proved again the equality of the sexes by a diplomatic blindness no less absolute than her lord's. This Society, who welcomed with politeness and even with pleasure the elect of the Insular Barbarians, were amazed by the revelations of the English Divorce Court, and by the scenes, quarrels, and even combats in high life, which were reported in the papers. They shuddered at the vulgar publicity and wondered that their English friends lacked grace to imitate the Parisian mode.

Stephen Calinari

But, though some years had passed since the battle of Sedan, the London Society, on which the bright young eyes of Stephen Calinari looked with admiration, had not yet attained to that fine point of *chic* which was the ideal of the Imperial Court which had passed away. They had been long at the lesson but were still capable of the strangest failures. They blundered into rumours, rows, and even elopements. They threw back, as it were, to the days of the postchaise and of Gretna Green. And after all the majority yet clung to the old-fashioned scruples; and the rows which echoed around their erring sisters and brothers only helped to confirm them in their virtue. Nevertheless, viewed as a crowd, they had become far more Parisian than their parents, far nearer to the Madame Flicflac whose moral ideas had filled Thackeray with wonder, and whom he had contrasted so sharply with those English dames of the early Victorian era, exclusive, narrow, but intensely respectable, and equally proud of their position and of their virtue. The matrons whom Stephen beheld that evening were different from their mothers; and their own daughters, who accompanied them to the dance, bade fair to press forward with accelerated speed. Pride of position, however deeply felt, was treated with levity; and virtue was becoming less a matter of pride than of apology. Dressing was distinctly more Parisian; roses and lilies, though those of nature were still preferred, were more emphatic to the eye where nature had been niggard; and hair had begun to change colour with less pretence of concealment. A refreshing candour was growing rapidly in adornment, as in conversation. It

This Bud of Love

was a brilliant show in the eyes of the boy who stood in the doorway of the largest room, intent, with parted lips. Bright eyes and hectic cheeks, gleam of diamonds and pearls and shimmering gowns, all were in light movement in the blaze of light. A man of some sixty years who stood in the same doorway saw only frozen smiles and bored eyes, the restless glances which seemed ever looking here and there for something beyond; but to the boy the smiles meant gaiety of heart, the flushed cheek tenderness. In that first hour and moved beyond his wont he drank in the dazzling atmosphere in which he too would shine. For the men, who were comrades of the fair, he knew that they were not all as brilliant as the lights, and yet he fancied them at that first sight more brilliant than they were, and among them the elect, the young men who promised to be eminent, the young men with whom he would match himself in a race more than Olympic.

CHAPTER VII

THIS BUD OF LOVE

THE other spectator in the doorway turned his eyes slowly from the glittering show and inspected his neighbour thoughtfully. This was Lord Ranmore, who seemed to most men strangely indifferent to his great advantages. Before he came into his title he had been a member of a Government, but not in the Cabinet. As a peer of recognized ability he was expected to take

Stephen Calinari

an active part in governing the country; but he quietly but firmly declined either to go to the Colonies or to sit on Committees at home. He contented himself with surveying the course of politics from a critical position which he tried for his own satisfaction to make unprejudiced. He affected a somewhat old-fashioned air in clothes and bearing; his collars were rather high and of a cut already obsolete and his cravat was scrupulously stiff. He was reported to manage his country estate, on which he spent the greater part of the year, with the same good sense which he had used in his country's service. It was reported also by his friends that he kept a record of the course of public affairs at home and abroad in the same series of vellum-bound volumes in which he entered the succession of crops and the progress of flocks and herds across his well-rolled pastures. It pleased him to have the passing cattle and the passing politicians between the same boards. His face was grave and rather heavy; his broad shoulders showed the slight stoop of a reader; his dark eyes moved slowly from object to object; he seemed unwilling to speak, and when he smiled his eyebrows rose at the same time, as if he wondered at his own levity. In his Parliamentary days he had had a peculiar reputation for speaking as seldom as possible and for a nice use, when he was forced to speak, of the shortest words. He did not speak now, as he regarded the youth at his elbow, noting the keenness and brightness of his face; he looked at him moodily, not unkindly. At last he stretched out his hand and laid it rather heavily on his shoulder. Stephen started and turned; then his

This Bud of Love

eyes opened with quick recognition. "Oh, by Jove," he cried; "I didn't know I was standing close to you."

Lord Ranmore nodded very slightly towards the room. "You like it?" he asked.

"I *shall*," said Stephen with emphasis; "I shall love it."

The older man smiled and then slowly protruded his under lip, a familiar trick which made Stephen laugh. He had always liked this cousin of his father; he liked him now; he meant to make use of him too. He had thought of him often as a first step which would cost him little. Here was a connection who had influence, though he would pretend that he had none. "May I come and see you," he asked eagerly, "and have a talk?"

"I had an impression," said Lord Ranmore after a pause—"but doubtless I was wrong—that you were undergoing some process of education."

"Oh, I've done with all that," said the boy, laughing. "When may I come? To-morrow?"

The older man said nothing, but protruded his under lip and continued to gaze moodily upon the smiling youth, who promptly took this silence for permission.

"At what time to-morrow?" he asked.

"Politics?" asked Lord Ranmore with a groan; and Stephen nodded in answer.

"Why come to me? I am nobody: I can help no one."

"You will let me come," said Stephen with his hand on his arm. "May I come at eleven?"

Stephen Calinari

The other growled and again his young kinsman took it for permission and thanked him warmly. He was still thanking him when in a moment there seemed to alight before them a fairy from some brighter atmosphere, a Hebe on winged feet. A tall long-legged young man stood waiting a little in the rear; another was approaching but she waved him away with a smile and a nod. She laid two slender fingers on Lord Ranmore's sleeve and looked with high serenity on this new youth who had come within the confines of her little bright light world.

"Is it or is it not?" she asked with the fine eyebrows frowning a little as if with an effort of penetration. "I came all across the room to see." She stuck out her little full under lip ever so little, a trick which she had caught from her father and which became her immensely.

"Is it or is it not?" asked Stephen in return, and he frowned with the greater decision. "It can't be," he added; "and yet—are you Elf?"

"Why wouldn't I be?" she asked with a highly artificial Irish accent which she at times affected. She had had the fairy gift of a Celtic grandmother. Indeed Stephen could scarcely believe that this was Elf. With her clear eyes wide apart, her low wide brow, her candid mouth and short round chin, she had the face of an angel, of a fashionable angel. Could this be she who two short years ago or less had followed him about with artless admiration and an apron which was almost a pinafore, and whose little forefinger was so often inky with the memories of French exercise? It struck

This Bud of Love

Stephen as incredible; the life of a boy has no change so quick, so dramatic. Through the slow degrees of hobbledehoy the dirty boy grows imperceptibly to grace; but to a girl born to such things the clock strikes and like Cinderella she dances out of her stained apron and away in satin shoes. This was one thought of this clever young man, the thought of what a transformation was here. The second was that he need doubt no more. He had said to his friend in his folly that it would be Lotty or Elfrida. He had not even set his penetrating eye on Lotty; but yet he knew that it was Elfrida. All the past cried out to him the same; it had always been Elfrida, always Elf. It was Elf who had cried when he failed to score in the village match. It was Elf who had climbed the old mulberry tree, which grew all over the kitchen-garden wall, and had filled a stolen basket with the great luscious fruit for him. It was Elf to whom in moments of expansion he had mentioned the great career which he proposed to run. He could see her eyes—yes, they were the same eyes—full of trust and admiration—but here the brilliant young person at whom he had been staring like a fool, pouted again in that pretty manner which was all her own and then began to laugh; and the gazing youth awoke to the thought that it was not quite certain that her admiration had the old completeness, the old simplicity.

“I’m going home,” said her father. Elf pinched the arm on which her little hand had been resting and he started and cried out. She laughed. “I’ve left you to Susan Morby,” he said; “and I wish her joy of you.” He went away rubbing his arm and left the two young

Stephen Calinari

people together. "Will you dance with me, Sir?" she asked of Stephen.

"You are not engaged?" he asked with polite surprise.

"Of course I am," she said—"to him;" and she indicated the tall young man who was still standing expectant; and then to him she said, "This is a long-lost cousin of mine: I will dance with you later or another night or some day."

The tall youth bowed without a word or smile, but his eyes followed her as she floated into the dance with Stephen who had a natural gift of the valse.

When the dance ended Elf turned to her partner a face lighted by joy. "Ah!" she said; but that was enough, such pleasure was in the sound.

"You like dancing?" asked Stephen with a rather superior air.

"I love it."

"I must say you do it beautifully."

"So they say," she said; "and you are not bad. I don't care a pin who the man is if he will only dance in time."

"Thanks," said he and laughed with a touch of the high ironical, which was wholly lost upon the lady. "You might dance with a motor man," he added presently.

"What an ideal!" she said; "but he'd be too mechanical."

Meanwhile the other dancers had crowded like sheep through doorways into other rooms; and Stephen finding space about him and being yet a little uncertain

This Bud of Love

of the habits of the ballroom, was just offering his arm to the lady, when he felt a familiar pressure of his other arm and turned to greet his grandfather. The little gentleman had a habit of pressing his grandson's further arm, which made the action almost an embrace; it was a compromise of southern emotion with the chill insular habits of his adopted country. Stephen saw at a glance that his grandfather had a mission. His eyes were shining; he scarcely waited for his young kinsman's greeting; he was almost literally on tiptoe. "The Grand Duchess," he said in a quick whisper; "she desires that you should be presented." Then he turned full of apologies to Lady Elfrida, whom he had not even recognized before. She laughed and "Go and make your bow," she said to Stephen—"never mind poor me!"

"I will bring him back to you," said the elder Calinari with his unfailing courtesy.

"Not at all," she said; "I assure you I don't want him."

Stephen was considering some clever speech, which should add grace to his withdrawal; but he was still considering and the lady still laughing, when his grandfather drew him away with undisguised anxiety. People made way for them and the young man could hear a murmured word here and there, which told him that somebody had asked about him.

"Madam's son"—"heir"—"Oh, enormous"—these and words like these just touched his quick ears as his grandfather led him through the crowd. In the next room, which they entered, the crowd was thicker

Stephen Calinari

save where in the centre of an empty space three people were standing. Mr. Calinari insinuated himself with muttered apologies through the denser folk, who were all staring with discretion, in a ring like sheep around a little dog, till he emerged with his convoy into the open space. There he arrested his grandson with an imperceptible action of the leading arm, and "Bow" he whispered sharply. Stephen bent his head and then again felt himself conducted forward. A stout lady of middle age turned slowly at their approach, and the youth obedient to another electric pressure bowed again. As he resumed his normal position he looked with curiosity at the kindly florid face which had been powdered with a generous puff. The great lady was well dressed, but a discriminating woman's eye would have seen that her corsets were the best thing about her. She regarded Stephen with the full freedom of the uncriticized. Even this boy, already excited by the quick changes of the night, almost blushed before her candid stare. She had big bold dark eyes full of good humour and underwritten with a pencil more bold than themselves. She was a famous linguist and prided herself on an Italian temperament. "Pel Giovane!" she said aloud to the delighted grandfather; and then, "You must gum and zee me," she added to the youth, who felt acutely all the gazing eyes around. After some friendly nods of admiration the great lady turned again to the two magnates, who had been provided for her special entertainment; and Stephen, obedient to the magnetic hand of his grandfather, moved a step or two sideways and was slipped into the crowd. The little old gentleman beam-

This Bud of Love

ing with triumph brought him straight to his mother. "She is delighted with him," he cried as soon as he drew near. Stephen laughed and his mother smiled upon them both. "She has asked him to go and see her," continued the proud grandfather; "you should have seen it."

"I did," she said still smiling; and then to her boy, "You did it well," she said; "but your bow should have been a little more from the waist."

Somebody laughed at Stephen's elbow and turning he saw the winsome face of Elf. She had stopped her tall young man beside the little family group. "What a success!" she said to Stephen; "you needn't pretend not to care; she is supposed to be awfully clever, learned and particular." Then with a very charming change of tone she said to his mother, "I congratulate you anyway and I thank you for an extra—extra—delightful evening: your floor is—ah!—" Words failed to express that floor.

Her hostess only answered with the kindest of all her smiles; and the young girl passed on on her partner's arm.

"Who is the long chap?" asked Stephen.

"Lord Angus Archdale," said his mother. "Poor fellow!"

"Why poor?"

"Can't you see," she said; "he is so hopelessly far gone, so many fathoms deep." She looked after them with something more than her usual sympathy with the romances of her neighbours.

"Fathoms deep in love!" was Stephen's comment,

Stephen Calinari

when to be punctual but not so well when to be silent. On this occasion at least he showed both virtues, and was at once prudent and fortunate. When the older man looked up at him, he took it for a greeting and he answered with his beaming smile. He took it also as an invitation to speech and forthwith took down the barriers. He had a great deal to say. "I won't take up your time with apologies," were his first words; and Lord Ranmore responded with that low inarticulate sound which a useful conventionality of literature represents by "Humph!"

"I am sure I may ask you for advice," continued the youth, and he turned the chair, which belonged to the writing table, and seated himself thereon.

This operation was regarded by Lord Ranmore with moody eyes, and they rested with the same gravity on the bright boyish face, which now confronted him and also the searching light of the high bare windows. Candid, tolerant, amiable, confident was that youthful countenance in the summer sunlight, which even in the London summer left it no chance of concealment. Its present critic made no comment on it but another low growl. He did not believe for a moment that his visitor wanted advice; he prepared himself to be enlightened. Nor was he doomed to disappointment.

"I told you last night," said Stephen, "that I had done with Oxford." And since his auditor did not comment on this even by the least audible of sounds, he proceeded to favour him with his views on Oxford and Oxford education, and especially on its advantages and more obvious disadvantages for himself. "I don't con-

In Lord Ranmore's Den

demn the place," he said, as his fluid and lucid speech drew towards a close; "but I should like you clearly to understand how its shortcomings affected me." He paused, and a low muttering was heard in answer. "I had got all I could from Oxford; to remain longer was to waste valuable time. I want to go in straight for politics."

A deeper growl was the salutation of politics; but something more seemed to be expected by the youth who was now leaning forward in his chair with a smile conciliatory and encouraging. He was almost like a young mother tempting her babe to walk. Thus drawn to an unusual effort Lord Ranmore, frowning, unlocked his jaws and produced the two words—"Which side?"

"Ah," said Stephen lightly, "I am rather well placed for that."

"What?"

"To choose."

"Humph!" By this time he had removed his finger from the paragraph in *The Times*, but he still kept the paper outspread on his knees and his eyes wandered gloomily back to it now and then, as his visitor, with admirable fluency and lucidity explained some aspects of things political.

"We know, of course," he said, with a complimentary emphasis on the "we," "that there is no real difference now between the parties. For foreigners both parties are more or less on the side of liberty; for home affairs both are reformers. *You* know, none so well as you, that the real business of the country is done, and well

Stephen Calinari

done, by the permanent men in the public offices; while new legislation is the result of give and take between colleagues in a Cabinet, and between the Cabinet and the Front Opposition Bench. The policies of either side reform, or pretend to reform, abuses; and they are arranged by a few men in big country houses, or in London libraries like this." His eye kindled; he glanced about him as if he were making a Bill with the aid of a prime minister, an editor, and a millionaire. "Of course you must trot out the old dead horses for the public," he said.

"Humph!"

"For our constituents we must denounce the men with whom we dine; we must pull out the stop of earnestness like an organ player; we must speak from the stomach."

"Grumph!"

"And now for your advice!" He leaned forward again and his smile was almost caressing. He was amused by this man, who responded by sounds, in which a nice ear might distinguish fine differences of expression, but which taken broadly were not far from the farmyard. Even now, in answer to his direct appeal for counsel, Lord Ranmore only pulled out from his museum yet another specimen of the true grunt Britan-
nic; and the glib tongue of his visitor began to wag again.

"I think I may say that there will be no difficulty about money. Grandada——"

A grunt for "Grandada." The name as used by an adult moved disapproval in this silent man.

In Lord Ranmore's Den

"Grandada is a rich man and will grudge me nothing. He will like to see me in Parliament. As soon as I ask him, he will pay a few thousands to the central fund of the party—of one party or other—and the boss will run me for the place I want. Now tell me! What constituency shall I ask for?"

Lord Ranmore drummed heavily on the paper which covered his knees and regarded the young man from the corner of his eyes with a look almost malevolent. "So you'll be rich," he said with difficulty.

Stephen fancied that he heard his jaws creak before the words came forth. He laughed encouragement; he felt all his prosperity. "I shall be all right," he said, "as far as money goes—and money goes far in things political. The rich men make peace or war, provide the supplies or cut them off; they destroy a foreign nation's character by letting her securities down with a run; they are bound to grow stronger and stronger as they work more together in all the big cities of the world. Look at the Jews with their ties of race and family! If they say No in three capitals, what emperor can go forth to war? Money will be every year a greater power; and of course the individual politician can go no way without it—can't even keep his free hand without it. Now, grandada is one of the rich, you know—not of the very very, but rich. He is well inside, in the ring, in the swim, in touch with them all, in Paris, Berlin, Vienna and the rest. And I shall have him and his last drachma behind me. You don't mind my speaking so frankly to you—and you will advise me a place to go for, won't you?"

Stephen Calinari

Lord Ranmore seemed to try to speak. His mouth opened and closed again as if with a spring. "It sickens me," he began at last, and stopped.

"You think I'm wrong?" asked Stephen, surprised, but prepared to exhibit an open mind. He went in for candour.

"No," growled the other. "It's I who am probably wrong, as usual." It was a sign of unusual emotion that he got up and began to walk about. Then he stood still and broke out again. "Such wisdom from a boy! It's revolting—revolting."

"Oh, I say!" said the boy, laughing.

"Try and get an illusion somewhere," said the man.

Stephen showed no offence; he felt none. He felt an amiable wish to ignore the weakness of this elder, whom he had asked for advice. He did not need advice; he could do without it, or could get the little, which might be of use to him, from other men; his request of this statesman in retirement had been three parts mere compliment. He had risen, when Lord Ranmore had left his chair, and smiling, conciliatory, as if he would soothe a babe, he now followed him with kind bright eyes. He cared not a jot that he seemed to have been called "revolting"; he only felt a little shamed by this crude show of a fogey's belated prejudices. He would have found words with no difficulty whatever, which would have expressed his amiability and perhaps exasperated his friend the more, had not their barren conference been ended by the intrusion of irresponsible gaiety. There was a scuttle of pebbles and hoofs in front of the windows and a babble of voices; and Stephen turning

In Lord Ranmore's Den

quickly saw Elf spring from saddle to pavement without waiting for the help of Lord Angus, who had almost fallen from his steed that he might be in time to lift her down. The next moment she had opened the library door and appeared, epitome of girlhood summer and sweet air, in the sober room, which was trim and neat as a pipe-clayed soldier. The baffled Angus had ridden sadly away; the groom was conducting the young lady's beloved horse to his stable; and already the girl herself had forgotten both horse and man, caught by the new interest, the matter of the here and now. It amused her to find her newly recovered cousin thus closeted with her sire. It flashed through her mind that it looked like a request for her hand; but this could scarcely be after a single evening. The flying thought added to the flush, which the ride had given to her cheek, to the light of her eye, to the gaiety of her laughter as she shook hands with the youth. She greeted him with a frankness wholly delightful; it was clear that she had picked up the old childhood's intimacy just where it had been dropped. Stephen, looking at her with candid admiration, saw again the slim schoolgirl in the rumpled working apron, awkward with the picturesque awkwardness of the half-grown, and saw with the same eyes the exquisite young woman in the well fitting habit, the rose of the warm cheek, the fair hair just ruffled. The likeness and the difference touched him with joy.

Elf, looking at Stephen, said to herself that he was as handsome as she had thought him last night; that his looks stood daylight; that he justified her schoolroom

Stephen Calinari

preference. She laughed and put out her little under lip in a manner so like her sombre sire's that Stephen laughed. The sombre sire had breathed an excessive sigh at his daughter's entrance and again seated himself in his big chair and begun to search for the paragraph whereon his finger had rested last; but Elfrida lightly went to him, hooked away *The Times* with her little hunting-crop, and kissed him on the forehead. Thereupon he smiled at Stephen with his eyebrows arched, apologetic, defiant and amused.

"Are you really going home today?" she asked of her father, who nodded grimly. "You won't stay and hand us over to our blessed duenna?"

He shook his head for answer.

"Did you ever see such a man?" she asked of Stephen. "He goes down to his horrid beasts and sheep and leaves his own children. He prefers beasts and sheep—don't you, Joey?"

"They don't talk so much," said Lord Ranmore. "They just fatten in silence."

"And that is what you would ask of your daughters! Anyway you can't complain of Lotty. I left her doing her old art needlework with a mouth tight—tight as Sukey's lacing."

"Respectful way to speak of your aunt," growled Lord Ranmore.

"May I ask who Sukey is?" asked Stephen.

"Aunt Susan—Lady Morby, you know. Joey's the ill-wind that blows her some good. She only lives at parties, and if he didn't let her take us out sometimes she'd have to hire a foundling or an heiress from the

In the Manner of Watteau

far far West. Are you going to the Starfords' to-night?"

"I'm not asked; I don't know people. You know I only came to London yesterday."

"What does that matter? I'll get you asked, and you must be put on Branksome's list of young men. Young men are always wanted. I'll tell Branksome to put you on his list." She stood regarding him with her little critical frown; and Stephen bowed before her like a young courtier, half in jest, who accepts the orders of a maiden queen.

Lord Ranmore, with his finger once more upon the paragraph, frowned heavily on both the young people. "Perhaps," he said, "you will now leave me to my paper."

His daughter pointed her whip at him with frank mockery and then shook hands with her cousin, bidding him be sure not to forget the Starfords that evening; and Stephen, receiving a final nod from the girl and a last grunt from the man, went out into the sunshine, confident of happy hours.

CHAPTER IX

IN THE MANNER OF WATTEAU

STEPHEN went everywhere, as the saying is. He was delighted with the fun, with the warm pavement beneath his feet, the tempered brightness of the sky. His heart beat with the pulse of Piccadilly. Now was the time to play the fool, but with discretion, in this

Stephen Calinari

end of a gay season, which had even some novelties for votaries less fresh than he. Why should he become the dull boy of the adage? He could afford to put off for a few weeks the search for a fit constituency. Lord Ranmore had departed to his flocks and herds; and Stephen said to himself that he would leave that Cincinnatus for a while to his meditations on undecorticated cotton cake, and when the season ended he would go down and touch him up again. He still counted with confidence on his help, but in the meantime his daughter was more agreeable to the happy day. He sat at her dainty feet and learned his little lessons in the primer of frivolity. And Elf was charming in his eyes. Memories of the happiest hours of his boyhood came without call when he beheld her, and summoned in their turn the most delicate sentiments. He had found her the same, and yet enchantingly different; she was the very centre of the life on which he had alighted as on a fairy sward. It was clear that all folk felt her charm, that all were in love more or less with this bright creature. To be distinguished by her from the crowd of men, was not that an exquisite pleasure? And indeed she had the prettiest manner of distinguishing him. She had the air of directing his infant steps, of looking after him, of being responsible for his doing the right thing and knowing the right people. To see her pucker her eyebrows or pout her under lip as she observed his conduct in Society was to enjoy a spectacle even more pretty than comical.

Stephen, whenever he entered a room, looked immediately for Elf. If she was not there, he was not sad,

In the Manner of Watteau

for his life was going so gaily that he was incapable of even a show of melancholy. Indeed, if his lady were not there, he was gay with her friends, especially with those girl friends to whom she had made him known. "Elf's new cousin," they called him. They seemed to take his devotion to her for granted, and in her absence they pleased him with sly allusions, and found a safe ground of harmless flirtation in his plain admiration of another. These chosen friends of Elf were charming in the young man's eyes, and he made himself very pleasant to them. They defended him behind his back when their favourite young men called him a prig. "You mean that he is good," said one; "or that he doesn't go to Newmarket," said another.

Stephen liked the young men too, and did not trouble himself about the accusation of priggishness. His mother had seen to his election at a good club some years before, and he met the golden youth there as well as in ballrooms and dining rooms. He did not get on so well with them as with the girls; he accepted the fact. Their intimacy with each other stood in the way. Some were young Guardsmen, others in public offices, others in nothing but the lap of luxury; but they had been at the same schools, they called each other by their Christian names or nicknames, which Stephen thought rude, or stupid, and much of their conversation was chaff which he did not understand. They struck him as still extraordinarily young, schoolboys with schoolboy chaff, only solemn when sport became the topic, with a boyish knowingness about racehorses and the lighter theatres. Since it was bad form for the soldiers to talk of duty or

Stephen Calinari

the young officials of affairs, and since poetry, philosophy, history, science and art, were all alike taboo, their talk was fragmentary and had a tendency to become in the absence of ladies somewhat unedifying. They took some pains to appear more wicked than they were, and would rather be suspected of almost any crime than of chastity. Stephen, who was by nature somewhat of a prude, liked them best when in the society of ladies. They were very pleasant, and they were honourable according to their schoolboy code, and Stephen, who was far too acute to expect no crumpled rose leaf in his happy lot, was quite content with their society. Neither boys nor girls seemed to regard him as an intruder on their careless troop; they were good-natured and kind, and presently began to chaff him also a little, not, it must be confessed, with any fineness. He took it all as part of the day, which was on the whole one pleasure. It was delightful to find himself asked everywhere, often to be recognized by his hostess, and sometimes even welcomed. Elf, with a pretty ostentation, and Madam Calinari, with more secret diplomacy, had seen that he went to the right places. And indeed it needed little trouble or talent to put in circulation a young man who wore the right sort of clothes and danced in time. Besides he was conspicuously handsome. Even the Grand Duchess knew him when next they met; and other great ladies smiled upon his looks, and more than one asked him to luncheon. It had many of the elements of a colossal success.

Among the pleasant days one of the brightest was a day on the river. Elf had decreed that it should be,

In the Manner of Watteau

and at her command the gentle Thames had donned his finest beauty. Their roomy boats were tied to willow boughs, while they had tea in a place all flickering light shadows and looked out on water all twinkling points of light. There was more laughter than wit. If we may include Lady Morby, who was young in everything but years, they were all young people, all particular friends of Lotty and Elfrida, but not too particular, all at ease and gay and playing like the dancing sun and shade. A light chaff prevailed. The atmosphere touched fine chords in young Calinari—it was a little Greek perhaps—it was exquisite. Girls in white frocks and boys in straw hats, they were like a decorous picture of Watteau; and the sense of London, their London of yesterday and tomorrow, gave this rustic jaunt its finest air.

Elf was like the spirit of the place. When tea was finished and they all began to wander upwards through the pretty wood which rose rather steeply from the river bank, she took Stephen with her, choosing him with a candour which disarmed criticism. Lord Angus had moved as if a glance would bring him to her side, but Elf had looked beyond him and beckoned to her cousin and led him away. As together they moved slowly up the grassy track between the thick leaved trees, she slipped again into her favourite mood with him; she looked him over critically as she moved at his side. "Why ain't you more like other men?" she asked, considering, pouting.

"Lord Angus?" he asked in return.

"Well, he's very good form."

"Not very clever?" suggested Stephen. Then he

Stephen Calinari

laughed; and then he added, "I suppose it's bad form to be clever."

She considered that point. "You needn't be stupid," she said after thought.

"Not too stupid," he suggested, "but just stupid enough."

"Clever people are all very well in their way," said the maiden with candour.

"If they don't come in your way," said he.

"I suppose that's meant to be clever?" said she.

"Not at all," he said.

They moved slowly upward. Their shadows were growing long; still evening held the leaves; the trees seemed to be going to sleep in the drowsy air. The shadows on the girl's white gown moved only with her motion. "You think cleverness uncanny," said the youth, "ungentlemanlike, un-English."

"I wish your name wasn't so un-English," she said at once.

It gave him a slight shock, it had come so quick from her tongue. It was clearly a familiar thought. He did not like the idea of her objection to his name. He laughed, but laughed uneasily. "It is one of my best cards in the game political," he said defiantly.

"Political!" she echoed, and protruded the expressive lip. "You know that Joey had to give up politics," she added, looking askance at her cavalier.

Her tone set the cavalier off on words which were too like a lecture. The words went the familiar way, and made phrases on the use and abuse of politics, and presently on the chances which lay open to the ambition

In the Manner of Watteau

of this keen young man. The child of long ago in the schoolroom apron had listened open-mouthed to the mighty purposes of the small boy in jackets, but the young lady now grown so worldly wise in her second season was by no means profoundly impressed by the young man's confident garrulity. He did not notice this; he was off on a familiar course, explaining a few matters for her instruction, and in the end anxious to justify his name.

"Yes, it's a distinct advantage," he said with decision, "a name like mine. It sticks among the slow wits of the British public. A Johnson takes half a lifetime to get himself distinguished from all the other Johnsons; and then they give him a title ending in 'borne,' or 'bourne,' and the public give up the effort to distinguish him from all the other peers in 'borne' or 'bourne.' They take time to learn a name like mine, but they don't forget it."

She walked in silence by his side. She was by no means convinced; she was vexed with him and his cleverness. She thought it quite easy for people to be too clever. She connected it vaguely with a sparing use of soap and water, though, when she shot a quick glance at the youth she was reassured on that point. She even doubted if he did not look a little too clean, as if his bright face shone with a too liberal application of soap. But on the whole she approved; she thought him very well turned out, a credit to her. She admitted that as a rule men were the best judges of men, but she held that she was an exception.

These riverside woods belonged to the father of one

Stephen Calinari

of the party, and in his house they dined. The windows of the dining room, which overlooked the valley of the Thames, stood open to the evening air. After dinner they were carried in flies to the station, and so returned in the deepening dusk to the London of their daily life. Elf was as quiet as Lotty on the homeward journey. The soft influence of the summer night had a message for her, and the light laughter of the day was done. Lord Angus looked at her with sad eyes from a near corner of the saloon carriage, and once on the journey Stephen's hand, dropped by his side, touched hers. She moved her own hand away and laid it in her lap; but she remembered how years ago she and he had driven home from a schoolroom picnic hand in hand, side by side and holding hands in the face of day. She remembered what an amazingly fine fellow she had thought him then. Was he so fine a fellow after all? He thought so anyway. She was inclined to think so. She was aware of the eyes of the love-lorn Angus, and wondered if she could learn his real opinion of her cousin, and wondered why she should attach any value to his opinion. So wondering she arrived at Paddington. The little playing at country between the dance of this night and that of the next was over and done, and the young folk had come back from Trianon, from the garden of Watteau, from a beribboned Arcadia, to the Park, Pall Mall, Piccadilly, and the progress of the London season.

In the Home of Art

CHAPTER X

IN THE HOME OF ART

THE peculiar feature which the fashionable world showed in that year of Stephen's first view was a lively interest in Art. Heretofore it had been held, and perhaps too often repeated, that Britons took nothing seriously but politics and religion. Art certainly had not been taken seriously except by artists, and not even by many artists with the exclusive earnestness of their continental brethren. Now on a sudden Art became important, and even persons of fashion who still showed, as was to be expected, a levity more light than others, were not so blind to its existence. Some people, whom "everybody knew," were even painting with their own hands and with serious intention; and some, who could not paint but yet felt the need of a deeper interest, found it in the work of certain painters of whose existence they had just become aware. Indeed, in England at large a great deal of emotion which had been absorbed by religion was in need of a new object. It was the hour of the widest and highest claims of scientific men; and many people, who made no effort to read their books or understand their teaching, had an impression that they were on the way to explain everything or almost everything, and that to confess to religion was rapidly becoming a sign of stupidity. If the universe were being explained and the soul explained away, a deal of religious emotion was let loose

Stephen Calinari

and was going begging for an object. There were those who tried to warm with religious zeal the imagined duty of buying in the cheapest market, and others who sought a substitute for the unknown God by spelling humanity with a capital letter. But Art—Art also with a capital letter—had at the moment the strongest attraction, the most alluring charm. The wives and daughters of the men of science themselves turned their faces to the studios, professional people began to change their furniture, and even the fashionable folk were more or less attracted. Rich men's wives and clever youth from college spoke with a new solemnity of pictures which their husbands and fathers purchased with simplicity for the blank spaces of the upholsterer; and they saluted the work of the man who with an eye almost Japanese was trying to seize the impression of the illusive moment, or stood rapt in adoration before the poetic invention of him who recalled the mediaeval Italians with a beauty more haunting than theirs. Art for Art was the phrase, and to live for Art seemed the best substitute available at the moment for a life of self-sacrifice. If man might not live by bread alone, he might perhaps be saved by the pattern of his drawing-room curtains.

To our young adventurer into Society this fuss about pictures and paper-hangings seemed extravagant. These were for the decoration of life; they were in their proper place as adornments of a great career devoted to more serious affairs. In this gracious summer there had leapt to light in the heart of our begrimed London a new and sumptuous palace of Art; and as Stephen

In the Home of Art

stood in the largest of its spacious rooms he felt with a new keenness the pomp and pride of life. He knew of pictures as much as he cared to know; he had seen the galleries of Florence, of Dresden, of Paris; he recognized with wonder and a touch of pity that there were men, able and serious men, to whom the covering of canvas was the one absorbing interest. He was glad of this, glad that by their labours they added to the richness and splendour of the existence which even without them was so full of interest. He looked at the pictures around him now and perceived their originality; for indeed one of the causes of this new home for pictures was the bringing forth from comparative obscurity certain artists, widely different from each other, but alike in their unlikeness to the favourite painters of the day. And the place of their showing was of an artistic value too. The fair proportions of the rooms were pleasing to the eye, and the wide space of walls, whereon, above a low border of stamped green velvet, the pictures hung, each in a liberal air and independent of its neighbours. It was like the fine flower of a rich and potent country. It really seemed as if it were a sign of an advance towards Art of a nation not eminently artistic.

If Stephen looked at the pictures, he looked at the people more. No work of man was half so interesting to him as man himself. He liked to be there and, on an occasion like this, when the public were not admitted. It was a private party, a meeting of people who had met too seldom before. Ladies who were held to lead Society displayed the latest inventions of M.

Stephen Calinari

Worth amid the trailing robes of artists' wives or their imitators, who seemed to have slipped down to earth from the mellow canvases of old Italians. A duke or two, some popular statesmen, a general home from a little war, a few leading journalists, an actor, two rival actresses, an author without his wife—it was a gathering of divers people, and delightful to a fresh young spectator for its variety, its suggestion of the bright variety of the world.

Stephen had paused before the picture of a great artist, a picture which for a time had drawn his eyes and his thought from the varied stimulating crowd. It was a picture of Love and Death. Death, clothed in grey, with bowed head and hidden face, pressed forward, calm and inexorable, to enter at the door, where Love, the little tender joyous figure of Love, his rainbow wings even crushed a little against the doorpost, feebly barred the way. Here was a great theme treated greatly; and like the greatest, like Hamlet for example, it spoke close to the wise and learned and touched the heart of the simple. Stephen with his head held high looked at this picture with quickened interest, touched for the moment beyond his wont by some pathos of death, which was a far-off thing for him. Intensely conscious of his life, upright, firm on his feet, swaying a little at the hips as he looked upward at the tall canvas, he enjoyed a light shadow of melancholy. He appreciated more than ever before the possible seriousness of Art; he had an inkling of its amazing power. He was so far absorbed that he started as he felt a light touch and heard a light laugh at his side. He turned with a

In the Home of Art

laugh and blush for the start which he hoped that she had not noticed.

"Rapt in aesthetic wonder?" asked Elf with an air of mockery. "Did you ever see such funny people?" she continued.

"You shouldn't mock your fellow-creatures."

"Mock! I don't. I love them. I'm going straight home now to begin a gown like that one there—the confection of egg and spinach, both subdued. What were you staring at? What is it? Love and Death! How horrid!"

"It must come some day," said Stephen, smiling at the freshness of her beauty.

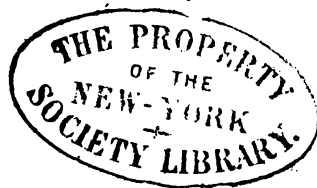
"So I have been told," said she.

"And Love too," he added, with a voice more low.

"Of that I do not see the necessity," she said. "Don't look at the pictures," she said after a minute; "it's mean. If you want to see them, you should come on a pay-day. I want to see the authors and artists and all that—and their womenkind. It's awfully interesting." She looked about her, critical of the crowd. "They ain't all frightful," she said presently. "Mrs. Wybrow's girl does it awfully well; she looks quite smart, but with a touch personal, artistic; but then she goes to a really good dressmaker, who wouldn't do it for anybody but Mrs. Wybrow. At least I could make her do it for me."

"You can make anybody do anything for you," said the youth, beaming; "but please don't be aesthetic. I like you smart with an unmitigated smartness."

"Do you?" she asked, regarding him with un-



Stephen Calinari

troubled vision. "And don't you grow your hair long and talk about pictures and be particular about the colour of your ties. Do you know that I know a boy who is getting himself quite disliked by his brother-officers for the colour of his ties—and he is a boy who hunts, too."

"No!" exclaimed Stephen with affected horror.

"Oh, you may laugh," she said, shaking her dainty head; "but this sort of thing"—and she nodded sideways—"is rather good fun in its way, but it must not go too far."

"You need not fear," said Stephen; "you may have faith in the brazen panoply of the fashionable Philistine."

"Am I a brazen Philistine?"

Winsome and fresh and fair she seemed in the young man's eyes. He was proud to be seen with her. What an adornment of a great career such a fine work of Nature was fit to be!

"Come," she said, "and help me to find Sukey."

"Then you are not here alone?" he said with pretended surprise.

"I brought my Sukey," she said; "but she caught sight of the Duchess of Buckland two rooms away, and elbowed contemplative aesthetes right and left and cut her path to the Duchess. So I was left pretending that I didn't belong to her. But now you must find her for me."

"I'll cut a path for you over the bodies of the cultured," said Stephen.

A Statesman and a Slum

CHAPTER XI

A STATESMAN AND A SLUM

INDEED Stephen had no wish that this Art movement should touch the world of fashion too deeply. It was such good fun as it was with its humours and its want of humour. But he had no fear of that; and as a good among goods this gallery, and all which it meant or seemed to mean, pleased him well. He shared with moderation the zeal of the zealous and was not offended by the mockery of the mockers. Now the mockers were the more in number among fashionable folk. In his innocence the youth supposed that some agreeable novelty of this sort appeared in each season. Perhaps he expected for the next summer the new theatre, the theatre of the high artistic ideals; perhaps he saw as in a vision the National Opera House rising twelve months later from a dedicated plot on the Thames Embankment. To each season some delightful novelty—that was what he expected in his innocence. If Art could be trusted to furnish a series of enchanting novelties, so much the better for Stephen. He had no fear, he would have laughed at the idea, that these would distract him from the serious business of life. Even in these sunny weeks, which he gave up to comparative idleness, while he looked on the passing show, gowns, carriages and flowering staircases, or pictures, statues and aesthetic maidens, he felt his interest leap twice as keen at the glimpse of a statesman condescend-

Stephen Calinari

ing in the frivolous crowd, or at the sight of the House of Commons busy on a hot day with affairs most commonplace. His heart beat as he looked down upon the House of Commons. He attended an important debate in which the chosen orators of the leaders' benches exchanged elaborate orations, two hours long, delivered slowly as if they were dictating to unready pens, and yet for all their deliberation falling here and there into strange grammar or choice of phrase, till the youth was half-ashamed for them and half-ashamed of his own rapturous assurance that with a little practice his own words would run much better. He laughed at the peroration which, coming duly at the end of each speech, seemed like something tawdry tacked on to a more homely stuff. Another day he saw the House busy in mere business, with no thought of oratory or the ears of constituents; and that struck him as much better. They are a business-like people, he thought, not eloquent nor imaginative, but good at affairs. If it struck him as a little dull he put the thought from him. He did not doubt that this was the place for him. He foresaw the chances of rousing these solid men of business from their lethargy. There they lolled beneath him with hats tilted on their noses; in some electric moment he would make them sit up. His lips moved as he gazed; he was answering a question with the Minister or pointing more acutely the question of that gentleman of the Opposition, who was on his legs at the table.

One night at a great party, as he stood in the hall among cloaked ladies waiting for carriages, and heard

A Statesman and a Slum

the bawling for footmen who clustered before the door, he felt a movement of interest in the tired crowd around him, and his eyes turned with theirs to the great staircase in that mansion of many memories. An eminent statesman was descending, leaning on the arm of his secretary, who was talking with vivacity. The face of the famous man was bent forward; there was a faint smile on his mouth as he listened; the eyes looked blind as in a face of stone. Leaning on his companion, he seemed to trust to him for guidance. Stephen's heart beat quicker as he looked up at the strange face of the man whose career had interested him so much. Born of a race which was but just ceasing to be despised, and of a father whose art, if it be numbered among the arts, is despised even to this day, himself in youth a fantastic fop and a weaver of ridiculed romances, he had become the leader of an old party, who distrusted novelty, and whose occupations and pleasures he viewed with an amiable contempt; and he had used these dazzled followers to transform the visions of his imaginative boyhood, the newest of the new, into solid facts fit to arouse the enthusiasm of a new generation of Conservatives. Stephen could stare at the face, which came slowly downward to the level of his own, for its appearance of blindness relieved him of the fear of rudeness. It touched him nearly; he longed to know the secret of that life, the abiding faith amid the shifting views. He moved a little that he might touch him as he passed.

On the next morning, as Stephen after breakfast was reading the paper in the window of his club, agreeably

Stephen Calinari

conscious that his idleness was not as the idleness of other young men, his eyes alighted on a paragraph which aroused his quick interest. The paragraph, which was in an obscure corner of the powerful journal, described the forcible eviction of the dwellers in certain buildings, which were to be destroyed before model flats for working men could be erected on the site. The inhabitants had had due notice, but had gone on living from day to day, until the inevitable policemen had entered at the appointed hour and thrown their furniture out of window. The reporter described the ejected families as brooding with their chattels in the paved court under the dingy canopy of heaven. How full of interest for quick-witted youth was the passing pageant of the day, of interest and of picturesque contrasts. He had studied a statesman descending a marble staircase, and within a few hours he could visit homeless folk encamped like tentless gipsies in the heart of London. He went out on to the steps of the club and nodded to a hansom driver, who drove his cab across to him and was consulted about the whereabouts of this distant court. The cabman was confident that he could put him down somewhere near the place, and Stephen settled himself in comfort for a long drive. The morning was hot and sultry and he was glad of the open air; but on his way the glass had to be lowered, for a heavy thunder-shower fell on a sudden, sweeping out the gutters with a rush and leaping with a silver spray on the wet street; and when at last he found the obscure paved court, he found it flooded with water. The rain had ceased and the sun shone out in a purified

A Statesman and a Slum

air, but the poor heaps of furniture were drenched, and drenched too were the men, women and children huddled on their goods.

Stephen was picking his way into the place in dainty boots of patent leather when a square-shouldered young man brushed against him and begged his pardon without looking at him. This stout adventurer was in a hurry, splashing boldly into the court, looking keenly at the shapeless piles and their passive guardians. Stephen stood still and regarded this other youth, who took his fancy. He was sturdy; rather short than tall. His black coat, which was not of the latest cut, had its dustiness well sprinkled by rain, for the wearer had emerged from shelter as prematurely as he always emerged. His high hat, which was also streaked with wet, was set rather back upon his head, and seemed to emphasize the flatness of his honest freckled face. He had not looked at Stephen as he pushed by him, but he almost immediately stopped and looked back at him, as if he had felt by that time that he was worth a glance. Looking at him he grinned amiably and came a step back towards him.

"What on earth brings *you* here?" he asked with raised eyebrows.

"Why not?" asked Stephen with a responsive smile.

"A ladida, a crutch-and-toothpick, a—— I beg your pardon; but I can do a bit with you. May I put you in?"

"In what?"

"I'm doing this for the——" and he named a morn-

Stephen Calinari

ing paper which was indulging at that time in a fit of enterprise. "Do you mind? I won't do it if you mind."

He had come very close to Stephen, which was a way he had, standing very near to him and looking so straight into his face with singularly clear prominent eyes, that a more modest youth than young Calinari would have been embarrassed by observation so direct. But Stephen liked the eyes, the clearness and candour of which illumined the square flat face, and he liked the smile which showed the gleam of shot white teeth between the full lips. This rough young man looked unusually healthy and honest. Moreover he showed an unmistakable interest in Stephen, and that was to his credit with Stephen.

"It is rum to see you here," he said. "You are a note."

He had pulled out a flat notebook and began to make quick marks therein. Presently he showed the page to Stephen, who amid some pencilled dots and scratches recognized with amusement a sketch of his head done with the fewest strokes possible.

"What club?" asked his new friend, as he took back the book and added further signs. "Turf? Marlborough? White's? I won't ask your name. The type will do. Stop, though! I should like to know your name—unprofessionally. You don't mind?"

"Not a bit. I am Stephen Calinari."

"Calinari!" repeated the other, still regarding him closely with his clear near-sighted eyes. "Madam Cally? Beg pardon! Madam Calinari?"

A Statesman and a Slum

"You know my mother?"

"Only her front hall. I sketched heads of guests one night by permission, while another young lion took down the names."

As he spoke his eyes left the face of Stephen; and putting on a pair of spectacles with very round glasses he gave his attention to the figures in the court, writing nimbly in shorthand and sketching scraps and profiles without a pause. But Stephen had no mind to let him go.

"Between a ground landlord and a philanthropic society!" he remarked, nodding his head towards a group of outcasts.

"Quite neat!" said the young reporter, and he jotted it down.

"Don't you think," began Stephen, "that ground landlords——"

"Oh yes," cut in his new friend, "but I can't stop for theories. I hunt facts and bits sketchable."

"But you will come and see me when you ain't busy? Come home, or to my club; let me know when you will come."

"Thanks awfully! Yes, if I have time." He laughed and his laugh was attractive; a fat chuckle of enjoyment, not unmusical. "I'm not a man of leisure, not a young swell, you know."

"Nor am I," said Stephen.

"Oh, yes you are, though you may not know it. Here, Paddykin!"

Up came at his genial call a little barefoot being with an Irish face full of fun, a pert nose and eyes dancing.

Stephen Calinari

To him the young reporter administered a penny and immediately fled from the place.

"I must see that fellow again," said Stephen to himself; but it struck him as strange, as he bowled homeward in his cab, that the fellow had not shown himself more zealous to improve the acquaintance.

CHAPTER XII

A PROPOSAL

LADY MORBY was one who took her pleasure sadly. Her pleasure was in the movement of Society; but her sadness was due to a prevailing discontent. If she were at three "good" houses in one night, she was haunted by a doubt if a fourth, to which she had not been bidden, might not be the best of all. She was vigorous in her quest of the lighted candle. For some years her only child, a daughter, was the manifest cause of her campaign. For the sake of her Arabella she fought the social battle; and it was suspected only by her intimates that Arabella, who was of a lethargic temperament, would have been often glad to stay at home. Then came the important year when the tired daughter made a marriage, of which Lady Morby was never tired of explaining the inadequacy, and set out with a new animation to follow the drum martial instead of the drum social. And yet at the first dawn of the next season, when Arabella was reposing in an Indian verandah, there was the bereaved mother with her black fringe bristling in the van and her black eyes

A Proposal

rolling in search of desired hostesses. She was upright as a grenadier, and seemed to stretch her long neck that she might see up crowded staircases over the heads of weaker sisters. She went up these staircases with the grim determination of a Scotch soldier mounting a breach; yet, for all her valour, she was not unacquainted with repulse. For a short time after her daughter's marriage it seemed as if the world welcomed her less warmly and less often. She compared herself with other women, and was certain that they went out more. "Of course, I do not care!" she said to this female friend or that. "Why should I? But I simply can't conceive why Adela and Emily, and even Jane, are asked to Lardner House and I am not. It can't be that Lady Lardner doesn't know," etc., etc.—for indeed the good lady had a tongue most voluble of her wrongs. Though she repeated again and again her absolute indifference, she clamoured, she almost screamed for her social rights. In the next spring she supplemented the attraction of her own dark rolling eye by taking almost forcible possession of an orphan girl whom she found it to be her duty to take out; but this maiden having been snatched from her hands by a nearer relation of like ambitions, Lady Morby was almost in despair, when her cousin Lord Ranmore met her eager eyes. Lord Ranmore was easily satisfied with evening parties, and began to entrust his daughters to Susan Morby, whom he called "Sukey"; and so eager was the one to go out and so content the other to stay at home, that the undefeated lady was soon recognized as regular chaperon of the two charming girls. "I would do anything to

Stephen Calinari

oblige Ranmore," she would say, "at any sacrifice. And you know what he is in Society!" And she would roll up those unappreciated fine orbs as if she called heaven as witness of her amazing amiability. She was rewarded by a season of unprecedented gaiety. Elf carried her into drawing rooms to which she had never penetrated before for all her indomitable valour; and the quiet Lotty was almost as efficient as her gay sister. The two charming girls without an effort held up the arms of their social warrior while the battle of fashion, grim and uncompromising, roared below.

But if Lady Morby was glad to be more in it than ever before, she had a sense of duty also. She did not forget that she was a sort of shepherd of picked lambs. Lotty gave her no trouble. Lotty had her friends and admirers, and pursued the happy tenor of her way, arousing little comment from the crowd; but Elf caught the eye, and set tongues wagging. Her chaperon felt that she ought to worry herself about Elf; and as she could not but worry herself, it was well that worry should be a duty. Whom would the girl marry? She was sure to marry somebody, and, if it should be the wrong man, what would that eccentric Ranmore say to her? "Oh, my dear, you know Ranmore," she said to her intimates; "he never speaks, but, when he does, there's nothing he won't say." She approved entirely of Lord Angus, and was beginning to hope that Lotty would not be so quick in choosing, when the young Calinari appeared upon the scene. Of him she did not know what to think. When she spoke of him to the girls, Lotty smiled and Elfrida laughed. "I only want

A Proposal

to know," she said at the confidential tea table when the girls were absent. "He may be the very thing. They say he'll be enormously rich; but then, those City fortunes! Here today and gone tomorrow as the saying is. And oh! my dear, you never saw such girls as these of Ranmore's. Lotty is so shut up; she only pats me and smiles. It's too provoking. And when I speak to Elfrida, she either laughs or snaps my head off. I wrote twice to Ranmore, and he simply didn't answer my letters. Then I wrote again, and he sent me an advertisement of a soothing syrup. So ridiculous! I simply don't know what to do about it."

What she did was to glower dismally at Stephen, who responded with the easiest politeness. He was not in the least afraid of her fringe.

Elf was standing one night before her glass, and pleased with the picture which she saw. Her hair had been docile, and had even improvised some unlooked-for little effects; her cheek showed a slight flush; her eyes shone. She was pleased, and yet her little foot was tapping on the floor. This showed a restlessness. The maid, whose good offices she shared with her sister, was regarding her with her head a little on one side, approving her own handiwork—taking more than her due share of the credit—when Lotty, already draped in her long light cloak, came into the room. Lotty stood also at gaze; she had a deep admiration for her sister, and more than her share of the mutual love of twins. She was conscious now of her sister's disquiet: she spoke to her in her most soothing tone. "Oh, don't bother me!" said Elf sharply; and Lotty was not offended,

Stephen Calinari

knowing that it merely meant that Elf herself was bothered. She thought in her wisdom that further speech would do her restless sister good, and so, as they went downstairs together, having left the demure inquisitive maid behind, she spoke, as if casually, of Angus, whom they had discussed often; but she got no other answer than an impatient exclamation and a quickening of light feet. Elf sped down the stairs. The hall door stood open, and the lights of a landau were seen before the house. The girl hurried down the strip of carpet which crossed the pavement, and into the carriage, where Lady Morby sat like a social martyr or Patience herself on a well stuffed cushion.

Elf was chattering of her regrets and her delays when the more deliberate Lotty entered the carriage. The ball gowns of the three ladies were patted and lifted and adapted to each other in the limited space, the footman shut the door upon the billowing stuff and mounted to the box, and the carriage rolled away to the most hospitable of the foreign embassies.

It was on this night that the anxieties of Susan Morby reached their height. She was deeply glad to find herself in that ballroom, for more than one of her dearest friends had desired to be there in vain; but it was the defect of this lady's qualities that peaceful happiness was not for her. She jerked in her place as she thought of the morrow, of the doubt of the next most desirable party, of the grim possibility that the Duchess of Buckland might leave her out; there was no counting on the Duchess of Buckland. And beyond these immediate cares she pictured Elfrida, and immediately after-

A Proposal

wards Lotty, at the hymeneal altar; and was terrified by her own future voice crying again, to all who would hear, that now at last she was freed from these tiresome social duties. The horror of a rest by night, of posts which brought no cards, of a lonely woman listening to the roar of a London world which heeded her not, appalled her as she sat smiling on the dancers. She was sure that for all her smiling she betrayed anxiety; but she was glad that her anxiety had on this evening a natural and even an engaging air. It was pleasing to be anxious about the fate of a girl whom many held the prettiest girl in the room and one of the best dressed. The chaperon assumed an air of importance, as if in possession of secrets which she knew well that her charge would never confide to her; she was prodigal of meaning glances; she shook her coal-black head, which one of those dearest friends, who had not been invited, had compared unfavourably with horsehair.

When the twins had entered the ballroom, Lord Angus had been the first man to go to them. Elf met him with an over-elaborate indifference, looking beyond him as she spoke; it was kind Lotty who gave his hand a little pressure and smiled like a sister.

"Oh, yes; this, if you like," said Elf in answer to the question of dancing. They danced, and while they danced the sad young man felt that he held in his arm a slight form that was slipping from him—a weak being too strong for his strength. At the end of the dance he stood near her for a few moments; he could not say the little nothings which fill the social silences, and he felt that he must not say what he wished. Presently, with

Stephen Calinari

a slight bow he left her, and went to a group of young men who were clustered in the doorway. Through these he pushed his way with less than his usual courtesy; he did not see who they were, nor even that his best friend, Wilfred Darley, was among them. Wilfred looked after him with a comical smile which meant pity of a sort, and then followed him out; but at the touch of his hand, and before he could begin to speak, Angus began to talk volubly of the polo match which was to be played next day.

"He must be bad, poor old chap," said Wilfred to another intimate when he went back to the doorway. "What cats these girls, who fancy themselves, are!" he added. "Old Angus is too good a chap to be teased with a dry fly; and fancy chucking him for that awful prig of Madam——" But here he broke off with a squeak, for his friend pinched his arm, and he was aware of Stephen passing through the crowd and almost at his elbow.

Stephen also was feeling a slight anxiety which gave him a becoming touch of humanity. He had come there with a purpose.

Poor Lady Morby had an instinctive consciousness of the purpose of young men who intended to propose to her charges. A shudder passed over her from head to foot as she came up from an abundant supper, and plumped into an atmosphere charged with this alarming electricity. She clutched the passing Lotty by the arm. "What is it? Is it—will he——" she gasped, trying divers openings, but incontinently tongue-tied. "Oh, Lotty!" She saw Elf leaving the dancing room

A Proposal

on Stephen's arm, talking quickly, as if unconscious of her surroundings, and Stephen bending towards her with an air which to the eyes of Lady Morby seemed that of a victor. Elf had danced dance after dance with her cousin, and had seemed not to know when Angus left the house. Of course she had known full well when he went, and indeed she would have known even if he had not said loudly to a friend at her elbow that he was going on to another dance, and probably to a third. He more than half meant to go on; but, when he had passed from the hot exciting house and the eyes and ears of spectators out to the tempered summer darkness and the lamps of the street, his fever heat turned ice-cold in a moment; he had not even spirit enough for the calling of a cab. He walked dismally away on the pavement, and went home and hid himself like a hurt animal.

Meanwhile the other young man with the vanquishing air was not wholly happy, though he was left in possession of the field. Elf gave him all her companionship for the time, danced with him, sat out with him, and went to supper with him. She was behaving badly, and she knew it; and she soothed her conscience by taking care that the favoured youth should not be too happy. She teased him; she treated him as a boy, and a vain boy; she was obstinately grandmotherly. Yet through these light defences Stephen steadily went forward to his goal. He had determined that he would capture this girl before the end of the season, and the season was drawing plainly to an end. It was in the little rosy room, which on normal days was the boudoir of the ambassadress, that he, bringing all the serious-

Stephen Calinari

ness of which he was capable to bear down her recurring levities, pressed the girl for some definite permission. "May I go to your father?" he asked with a due solemnity. Elf preferred that young men should make love to her with due discretion, but yet as if they could not help it.

"You don't need my leave to go to my father," she said crisply; "and besides, he's in the country."

"I shall go down to him tomorrow; and if he——"

It was at this moment that the black fringe of Lady Morby appeared nodding at the door; she had gathered all her courage, and tried hard for an air of entering by the merest chance. Elf jumped up, laughing. "Here's my nurse come for me," she said.

"May I?" he asked insistent at her ear, and following her as she crossed the room.

"Where are your manners?" she asked, with her provoking air of instructing him in the ways of the world. "Offer your arm to Sukey, and take her to her carriage."

"I shall go down tomorrow," he said firmly, and looking still at her while he offered his arm to her duenna.

"It's a free country," she said, with a rebellious pout of her lip.

The Wings of the Morning

CHAPTER XIII

THE WINGS OF THE MORNING

IT cannot be said with truth that Stephen Calinari passed a sleepless night nor that he endured those pangs of anxiety which might have been expected for a doubtful wooer. He slept like a top, and when his eyes opened clear upon the world he could not remember if he had dreamed of the lady of his choice. He thought of her as soon as he awoke, and that was far more to the purpose. He woke to a day such as he loved, a day which was bound to be eventful, full of movement, full of interest. Before the evening hour came softly in he would have seized a flying Fortune by the hair. He leapt up to a sense of adventure, to a quest of a wife. He was determined and confident, and yet with some jot of doubt remaining to allow him the human pleasure in chance, to keep the coming hours fresh with hopes and fears, to save him from the dull level of a foregone conclusion. Even as he dressed himself he found his journey in *Bradshaw*, a fateful volume which he treated with an easy mastery; he never could understand why people, even with humorous intention, spoke of its difficulties. He said no word of his day's business to his mother when she met him at their early breakfast. Only he appeared in her eyes so radiant, so alert, that she guessed at a glance what moved him, and, wise woman as she was, said not a word about it, but only kissed him with an added tenderness. From the first

Stephen Calinari

she had left this romance, which touched her so nearly, without comment, without apparent observation. Now she looked him over with a critical indulgent eye, and silently approved his clothes and tie. It was a costume to be accepted in. It did not suggest that he had thought too much of his own appearance, nor on the other hand display the untidiness of the lovelorn wooer of Elizabeth's dramatic time. The good mother saw him go forth into the morning with a smile and a hope which was half a prayer. This was her peaceful easy manner of prayer.

Stephen caught his train (he never missed one) and settled himself in a corner of an empty carriage with a few chosen papers; he had a journey of some two hours before him. At first he read his papers with usual calm, though other thoughts played lightly amid matters political; but as he drew near to the familiar station he could read no more. He began to look out of window with some eagerness; he crossed the carriage to look for objects on the other side; he fidgeted. When at last he arrived he got out quickly, nodded in friendly fashion to the stationmaster, who did not recognize the boy of former years, and walked away delighted to be in motion again. Adventure was in the air. It made him laugh low to see himself draw near to the abode of the grim Lord Ranmore, from whom he would demand most boldly his dearest treasure. He felt as if he would pluck the retired statesman by the beard had that firm chin presented such adornment. The country road was pleasant to his feet, the country air delightful to mere breathing. It was the fullness of summer, but

The Wings of the Morning

with the life of the early hours of the day. The quiet was a new joy after the rattle and the rumble of the town. Stephen had never felt ill since the measles of his childhood, but today he was conscious of a more abounding health. Between the hedges, dense in mid-summer bravery, between the borders of fresh grass not yet burned by the sun, lay open the country road inviting the feet of the wayfarer; and the wooer took the road with all the feelings of a conqueror. On such a road and on such a day burdens fall from the shoulders of vagrant men. One might be a gipsy lad for disdain of the shelter of roofs and pure joy of the open air. Thus in a conqueror's mood came Stephen to the familiar gates, where stood the old stone lodge clothed on with ivy clematis and briar rose. As Stephen came to the lodge he saw that a long spray of the climbing rose had broken loose, and that a little woman, who was doubtless wife of the lodge keeper, was trying to nail it in its place. But the little woman was short and plump and could barely reach high enough with the hammer; and so, smiling like a gay young squire on the threshold of his home, our victorious youth came behind her, drew the hammer from her fat little hand, and drove the nail to its place. The lodge keeper's wife gave a little start and a little cry and then a smile of apology and a blush withal. Stephen nodded, smiling, beaming, friendly as the morning. "I am going up to the house," he said, explaining his presence, and so with further nods and smiles went on his way as one who moves to music. He thought it likely that the comely little person looked after him, wondered about his errand, perhaps approved

Stephen Calinari

him as the right youth to play the part of wooer at the house. As a fact she did look after him, and it may be that she thought of him as he guessed. He could not help laughing as he went on.

When Stephen arrived before the wide stone front of the still brooding house he laid his bold hand upon the handle of the bell which hung like a stirrup beside the open door. With startling effect he set the strong bell clanging, and then, as silence fell again, he stood waiting on the doorstep and looked into the cool empty hall. His gay mood was a little dashed by the deep silence. He remembered that the morning was an unusual time for visitors; and when at last the lagging footman came he read surprise and doubt in his eyes. The footman left Stephen still standing there while he went to learn the wishes of his master. Soon however he came back and led the visitor through the hall to the library, which looked bare and spacious too. This was the inner citadel of Lord Ranmore, where he was never disturbed without due cause. He received Stephen with a baffling absence of surprise and of pleasure. He got up when he came in with a murmur which may have meant welcome, and he then went and stood with his back to the empty grate and confronted his visitor with gloomy meditative eyes.

When the guiding footman had departed and shut the door behind him, Stephen began at once to give the reason of his coming. If he felt a slight chill, he made haste to renew his warmth. He wasted no time in hesitation or introduction. He spoke at once and glibly of his hopes. He proclaimed his boyish liking

The Wings of the Morning

which had revived at a glance as a man's affection, and he stated with emphasis his determination, which he felt to have a fine air, not to make a definite proposal to the girl until he had obtained her father's leave to speak.

"I cannot deny," he said with his candid tone, with his clear eyes fixed upon that brooding face, "that I have come near to the subject. How could I help it? I said that I was coming to you; and I almost dare to think that she—well, I'll say no more. I didn't come to speak; I came to listen to you."

He was silent; he drew a little nearer; he looked all encouragement, as who would say that he knew that he had to do with one to whom words came hard, and that he was prepared for considerate patience. He waited, and was rewarded by no utterance more intelligible than a grunt. Then he spoke again, as one who repeats in other words a tale which a slow-witted child has failed to grasp; and at the close of this second edition Lord Ranmore emitted two sounds equally ambiguous with a pause between.

"Won't you give me an answer?" asked Stephen, persuasive, insinuating.

"No."

"That's not my answer?"

"Yes."

Stephen felt that this would never do. He began quickly again to offer further considerations, speaking with feeling of his love, of his zeal, of his ambition to attain a place which even such a girl might be content to share. Lord Ranmore snorted at this thought and turned his broad back; but Stephen went quickly for-

Stephen Calinari

ward that he might gain at least a side view of the countenance; and, "What do you object to?" he asked eagerly, wondering honestly, still eminently hopeful.

"You are too young and too clever," said Lord Ranmore turning upon him.

Stephen laughed clearly and gaily, but not the faintest gleam of the eye betrayed humorous intention in the older man.

"Come," said Stephen almost playfully, though his laughter had ceased abruptly; "there must be some real reason." And then more soberly after a pause he asked, "Is it my father?"

A dark flush rose to the face of Lord Ranmore. "I don't speak of that," he said.

"But to me?" said Stephen. "Surely——"

"He was my friend," said Lord Ranmore, bearing down the other's speech with a raised voice, "my friend as well as my cousin; I can't defend him; so I don't speak of him."

For the first time Stephen felt himself borne down, depressed, doubtful of the end. But after a minute's thought his spirit rose again; he recovered his air of courage and candour. "That is all very well for you," he said; "but you should think of me."

Lord Ranmore turned his back again with a snort which seemed to say that he did not see the necessity.

"You must remember," continued the youth, "that my father died when I was a baby. I have no wish to hurt his memory; I never would; but it is hard that conduct of a man, of which I know so little——"

The Wings of the Morning

"You know enough," said the other to the looking-glass above the mantelpiece. "There was a fuss about cards and your father left the country. I got the scandal stifled then, and by God no word of it shall sound now."

"But he is dead and I am alive," said Stephen pitifully.

Lord Ranmore was pushing about the melancholy bronzes of his mantelpiece. "He died to the world then," he said more quietly, "and you must never speak to me of him again."

"Is he the obstacle? That's all I ask."

"I shan't say."

"Then I am badly treated."

"Very likely."

Both men stood silent for a time, which seemed to both much longer than it was. Then Stephen, gathering the scattered arts of the forum, spoke again.

"I will say no more of that," he said, "nor will I ask you again to think of me; but your daughter——" He paused, and saw the shoulders before him shaking; he waited, taking this for a sign of a new impatience, but presently, to his amazement, found that the cause was silent laughter.

"She has not told you, I presume," said Lord Ranmore when his laughter had passed, "that the happiness of her life depends upon you?"

"No; but——"

"Nor, I presume," continued the other, storming down his voice, "will the happiness of your life be seriously impaired by this morning's conversation?"

Stephen Calinari

"I am extremely attached," began Stephen, and stopped, feeling the inadequacy of the words.

"You will stay to luncheon?" asked Lord Ranmore abruptly.

Among Stephen's whirling thoughts was amazement at the effective words of this silent man. His own eloquence seemed weak beside them; they were almost like blows. Lord Ranmore now moved from the fireplace and thus showed to the young man's eyes the hands of the bronze clock which were on the stroke of two; and even as the youth refused this growl of invitation a punctual brazen gong echoing through empty halls and passages drowned the words of his refusal with its persistent clamour. When the sounds ceased Lord Ranmore, frowning on his guest, again said—

"Extremely attached! You must unattach—unattach—and come into luncheon!"

"No, thank you," said Stephen for the second time, and gathering all his dignity. "I must apologise for disturbing you at an unseasonable hour. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," said the other going out of the room and leaving the youth alone amid the ruin of his hopes.

A Tramp by Day

CHAPTER XIV

A TRAMP BY DAY—A TRAMP BY NIGHT

STEPHEN had never had such a blow. When he stood on the broad doorstep before the house he felt as if he had been pushed out. Though the great doors stood open at his back, he felt a jar as if they had been slammed behind him. For the moment he was not master of himself. Standing there agape he had a vision of the Head of his late college; he vividly recalled the expression of that soft placid face when he had taken leave of it; he remembered that he had laughed then when he won to the open air. He did not laugh now. He awoke to the fact that he could not stand there till Lord Ranmore had finished his lonely luncheon and emerging from the dining room to the spacious hall should see him still waiting there like a persistent beggar. Yet was he loath to move. It seemed a long way to the station. He began to go almost before he had made up his mind to move. He passed the lodge with a furtive glance at the old-fashioned window, fearing to see the face of the woman who had seemed to speed his wooing. There was the spray of wild rose neatly nailed in its place, but no sign of the little woman. He felt an extraordinary relief. If she had looked out on him with sympathy his responsive grin must have terrified her; he would have grinned like a dog who had been kicked out. When he reached the station and went through to the empty platform he sank

Stephen Calinari

upon the bench and stared at his dusty boots like a tramp. He could not rest; he fidgeted on the seat; he got up and began to study the time-tables; it struck him that he might as well see when he could get away. Gradually, as his eye scanned the columns, he was aware that if he waited there for the next train for London he would have to wait some hours. He could not stare at his boots for hours. At that little station there was no bookstall, nor even a chance of the loan of yesterday's paper. He began to revive at a thought of doing something. The thought of Hal, his friend, came to him suddenly with promise of refreshment. That great kindly creature had been good for him before at a crisis. He would like to go and see him. And why not? He knew that he lived somewhere in these parts; his quick mind began to move on the roads and make a map of the country; he concluded that Hal's home was not more than ten miles away. To walk ten or a dozen miles was surely better than kicking an empty and dilapidated hencoop which shared the platform with him, better than an occasional visit of inspection from a lonely and suspicious porter. To tread the common road was a cure for common fidgets, for wounded vanity, for rejected love. He had heard of Hal's late triumphs at Henley, where he had rowed in the crew that won the Grand Challenge, and with the stalwart Bulpet had been victorious in the Pairs. He felt sure that he should find him at home now with his family, for how often had he laughed at his domestic tastes, at his simple devotion to his "people," to his home! There he would find him playing lawn tennis

A Tramp by Day

with his sisters or fetching and carrying for them, and repaid by a boundless admiration; there was he seated at plentiful meals, with all his cups on the dining room sideboard and his anxious mother expressing her daily hope that he would not overdo it, and ridiculed daily for her fears by the sturdy Dean, her husband.

Stephen had leapt to his feet at the first thought of action, and now after a few words with the melancholy porter, who confirmed his impression of the direction, he set forth on the road, feeling more like a sturdy beggar than ever, but glad of the feeling. The air was still, the sun hot, and the road almost bare of travellers. On he went, and his spirits grew calmer with the old rhythmic movement, which has been doctor to so many woes. He was glad of the swing of his feet. He was glad of the heat, and thought with a smile how his big friend Harold would have mopped his forehead. Presently he laughed and was surprised at his laughter. He felt strangely light, and his senses were as strangely keen; the smell of the earth almost intoxicated him, so warm and deep it seemed in the brooding heat. Then on a sudden it struck him that he was very hungry; no wonder he felt light; he had refused Lord Ranmore's luncheon; and the thought of Hal sitting at meat in his abundant home brought tears of weakness to his eyes. He stood still and explored his pockets with care. There was the return ticket, which would be of no use to him, and little else. His quest of the day must have excited him more than he would have held likely, for he had gone on his journey without counting the cost. He must keep sixpence for a telegram, which would

Stephen Calinari

warn his mother that he would not reach home that night ; and beyond the price of the telegram there were but pence for bread. That amused him. He wondered how far it was to the next village, and if its baker were good. And now since he had thought of his hunger he could think of little else. On he plodded, and as hunger grew more insistent, love was less. There grew before his eyes the outline of a village sleeping in a haze, and his feet quickened at the sight. Straight through the village went the road, and midway was a baker's window. He turned into the little floury shop and stamped on the dusty floor to announce his presence, while his avid eyes explored the loaves considering which was the largest. Presently there entered to him the baker's wife wiping her hands on her apron ; and having taken and paid for the loaf of his choice he was out again in the glare of the road and munching as he walked. It was amazingly good ; he wondered why people spent large sums on savoury luncheons in hot eating-houses ; he remembered that Shelley had liked to feed on bread as he walked in the Thames Valley ; so there was a precedent which, since he was or would be a politician, was a comfort. He laughed, as he munched, at his acceptance of the tyranny of precedent. His heart leapt up.

When he had sent his telegram from the post office of the village he passed beyond its bounds, and presently found himself, where the road led him, on the side of a broad valley. On his right was bare down, but on his left he could see beyond a gently sloping field the tops of trees, and beyond these again the other side

A Tramp by Day

of the valley curving down towards him like a shallow Greek cup for beauty. Down this far slope fair companies of trees descended here and there, low at the top where winds of winter caught them, but in the shelter of the gentle valley deep and full. In this still day at summer's height the trees looked almost black, so dense and dark was their foliage. Here and there too in the distance a little house was seen set like a child's toy with tiny enclosures about it—orchard, paddock, or farmyard—and rarer a grey church tower, veiled by trees, and a churchyard with a black dot, which was a solemn wholesome yew. There was no gleam of water in the valley, which seemed full of the very heat of summer, drowsy and still and rich. The young man glad of bread felt more and more the deep charm of the world in which he moved. It seemed a distilled draught of England; it touched a chord in him which was almost strange to him, some instinct deeper than his thoughts of self. He wondered whence it was; he could accept nothing without question; he wondered if this were love of country inherited from that unknown father or from some forbear of that father. "I am English too," his heart seemed to say, as it beat with the beat of his feet upon the road. He was aware of a tear upon his cheek and wondered the more. Was it blighted love or insufficient food? Or was it a tear from that deep well beyond all words, from the waters of the mystery of things? To think such thoughts at ease Stephen seated himself upon a five-barred gate and gave himself to the spirit of the time and place; he rested his feet, which his London boots had rubbed a

Stephen Calinari

little, and gazed upon the spacious valley. If this were melancholy, it was gracious; if he were tender from romantic loss, it was strange what pleasure he could draw therefrom. Swift pass the hours of contemplation. Stephen started on his gate, perceiving on a sudden how far upon his journey had gone the summer sun. It struck him how much of his own journey there yet remained to do. He descended, feeling a little stiff, and set forth again upon his way. Sturdily he plodded on. What were the whims of a girl? If only his boots would not rub him sore! If only he might reach shelter before the fall of night! He would tread life like this road; he could count on bread, and for the rest what possibilities there were! England for him and he for England. So he hardened his heart and swung forward steadily. In the evening dusk he was tramping into the old cathedral city, tired and thinking of little except that he was tired. Dusty, penniless, with no luggage, in a strange place, he almost stumbled as he went. Love and ambition were alike forgotten, and all his anxieties were concentrated into the one question where he might lie down and sleep. So through a maze of narrow streets he reached the dark fragrant night of the cathedral close, where the great grey cathedral rose like a ghost. He rang a bell which hung beside a narrow door in an old red-brick wall. He leant against the wall till he heard feet approaching on a flagged path within, and when the door was opened he stood up and opened his mouth, but for a minute no words would come. He was dead tired. He felt suspicion in the neat handmaid who peered out

A Tramp by Day

at him ; he felt that she took him for a tramp. With an effort at dignity he asked if that were the Deanery.

" No, it's not," she said curtly ; " and it's no use for you to go there, for the family is away."

" Away ! " he gasped feebly, and his voice sounded in his own ears as if he were wont to sleep under dry arches.

" Gone to the seaside," said the maid, and she firmly closed the door in his face, and Stephen heard her feet go pit-a-pat back to the house. To his senses, made more acute by hunger, the little tune of the feet was full of an irritating self-respect. His vagrant hand went quickly to his pocket to make sure that the bit of bread, which he had saved in case of accidents, was still there. Hope woke again at the contact with the staff of life, and he laughed feebly at his plight. Then slowly he went toward the great grey church, which proclaimed to all the countryside that man shall not live by bread alone. Albeit Stephen moving slowly round that ancient noble building chuckled at the thought that he had yet a piece of bread ; and finding at the further side a dry place and sheltered by a massy buttress, he sat down and leaned his back in the dark corner and was thankful. If only no intrusive officer, bishop or beadle, should find him and rout him out with ignominy to the casual ward ! So long as he might sit in his corner and gnaw his crust, all was well with him ; and he might dream of the world's high places or of enchanting love as of light-moving phantoms which, won or lost, might yet give colour to life, when one had strength and time to think of them. He

Stephen Calinari

mused and dozed and fancied half awake that in his nose were odours of the exquisite art of his grandfather's French cook ; and so he passed with a smile on his mouth to a deep dreamless sleep. Once in the night he woke to wonder where he was, but incontinently rolled over on his side and slept again before he had time to answer his own doubt.

CHAPTER XV

THE COOP FAMILY

DAWN was in the air and the first awakening of a new day. Birds were awake, if canons slept, behind the old red walls of the close gardens, and the high tower of the cathedral rose opaline in luminous vapour.

Stephen in his dark corner dreamed that somebody was kicking him and that he ought to resent it, but to his eternal shame was prevented by some punctilio which he could neither understand nor dispute. His agony awoke him and he found indeed that he was being stirred, but not ungently, by the foot of his fellow man. He uttered a note of expostulation, which came hoarse like a growl ; and his fellow man laughed. Then it struck Stephen, who was but half returned to life, that this was probably some small official, such an one as he had feared, and that his proper attitude as tramp assailed was to put up his arm as if expectant of a blow, while with a whine he

The Coop Family

protested that he was not doing any harm. This set him laughing and he sat up and rubbed his eyes, which then opened wide upon the aggressor. The aggressor was looking down on him with a broad smile. He seemed but little older than Stephen. He looked exceptionally young and stalwart in the light of dawn, strong on his legs, deep-chested, clear of eye and skin. A grin of amusement parted his full lips and showed the straight edge of his short strong teeth. He grinned with a very lively interest. "What in thunder are you?" he asked; and after a keen survey he added, "I took you for a tramp!"

"I suppose I am one," said Stephen stretching his arms and legs and then regarding the legs with rueful look. He had the forlorn air of one who has slept in his clothes, and awoke in the chilly air of peep of day.

"That fetches me," said the observer. "A tramp that prefers the lee of the good old cathedral to a night in the workhouse. That's why I stirred you up—to see what sort of tramp you were."

"Yes, confound you! I believe you kicked me."

"A mere touch, and I ask your pardon. I see what you are now." He continued to scan him with his clear eyes and amiable smile. Then suddenly with a short snort of wonder he plumped down on his knees to bring his face nearer to the object of his interest. "By Caesar!" he cried; "yes—it's the crutch-and-toothpick boy!"

This description was not to Stephen's taste; but the other cared little for that. He examined him closely and without apology. "What a contrast!" he said;

Stephen Calinari

"it's amazing; it's amusing; I must do a bit with you."

So frank an interest in his personality, even if it were a little critical, was sure to arouse the interest of Mr. Calinari. He began to feel warmer and sat up more straight and rubbed his chilly legs. "I think you mistake me for some other fellow," he said.

"I don't mistake people," said the other youth curtly; and "don't you want some breakfast?" he added in a moment.

"By George, I do!" said Stephen, whom the mere word struck to a poignant sense of vacancy; "and a bath," he added wistfully. He was a very clean youth and had never before felt so dirty. "Would a bath be possible?"

"Possible? You can't escape it. It's in the regulations. Here! Catch hold! Up you come!" He had scrambled up from his knees, and he now stretched down to the prostrate Stephen a pair of strong short-fingered hands. The prostrate youth grasped those helpful hands and found himself in a moment erect in the fit attitude of man. He swayed a little on his feet as he muttered thanks; and his eyes blinked in the fresh sunshine which wrapped him round with comfort now when he had emerged from his cold corner. He blinked and swayed and smiled at his own weakness, while his benefactor came nearer, studying him with frank interest and, that he might examine him better, mounted a pair of glasses on his nose. This keen scrutiny amused Stephen, and, as he stood there recovering his wits, he began to examine the examiner.

The Coop Family"

"I've seen you somewhere," he said; "what did you call me just now? I'm only half awake, I think. Oh, yes, I know—the slums—the reporter. You never came to see me."

"No time," said the other. "Here! Come on!" He caught hold of Stephen's arm and led him out of the cathedral precincts and through a crooked lane into the high street. "And how did you come to this?" he asked as they went on together; "why are you fallen from your high estate? Cut off with a shilling? Going to 'list at cavalry depot, or what?"

Stephen made no answer, but only checked him feebly at the door of a chemist's shop. He freed himself from the supporting arm and almost tumbled into the shop over a boy who was scrubbing the step. The chemist, who was putting things in order, looked at him and guessed pick-me-up; but it was a tooth brush which the dilapidated visitor picked out of a glass box on the counter. Then on a sudden, tooth brush in hand, he realized his fall from civilization. The chemist had said "sixpence"; the purchaser had not sixpence, not a penny—nothing in his pocket but a few crumbs. He stared at his friend who had followed him across the scrubbing boy. His friend, though short-sighted, was of quick perceptions. He said not a word, but promptly laid a sixpence on the counter and gently pushed his splendid pauper out on to the pavement.

The boy stood up to let them pass; he in his leisure moments was a voracious reader of the sensational,

Stephen Calinari

and now he wondered darkly what this dissipated young man had been up to.

Only a few doors further down the street stood a house with old stone front and an array of posts and chains before it. It had an air of dignity fallen a little to decay. Two generations ago it had been the home of a dapper little lawyer, who had the deeds and the secrets of half the country gentlemen of the district in his keeping; but the grandson of the little lawyer was himself a peer, with deeds and secrets of his own, and had forgotten the whereabouts of this old house, which had been the pride of his grandsire, and which had passed from one to another till it was now the shelter of the widowed Mrs. Coop and her hearty brood. Two boy Coops played vigorous cricket for the school which nestled under the shadow of the cathedral. Two daughters, Bet and Jinny, ruled clothing clubs, mutual improvement associations and young girls' friendly societies, and took lawn tennis prizes in moments of leisure; and Chaloner, the eldest son, returning to his home at intervals, could be depended on to rouse them all to an even higher animation by tale of a new experience or introduction of a new mate. He had never had a greater success with his family than when he introduced at the early family breakfast a brilliant youth, washed, brushed, and hungry. The two boys, who took their breakfast seriously and were due at school at an early hour, said little, but had their pleasant eyes on Stephen when they were not fixed upon their plates. Of the two girls, Jinny talked whenever their elder brother was

The Coop Family

silent; and their mother, sitting behind an old-fashioned urn at the top of the table, put in a word to set them off again if talk flagged. Mrs. Coop loved talk. She chuckled till the teapot shook in her hand at her children's comments and jests more numerous than witty. She beamed on Stephen as if he were an extra child, and saw him eat with a pleasure almost equal to his own. When Stephen could consider anything but the food, of which he had been sorely in need, he was struck by the highly comical resemblance of the stout lady in the white cap to her eldest son. She sat smiling on her Chaloner with a smile which was the fellow of his; she was immensely amused by him and by the attacks which he loved to make upon his sisters.

"Betty gets up concerts," he was saying to Stephen, "because she can't get a song in at anybody else's."

"They'd bar you at your own concert," said Jinny, "unless it was at the Home for Deaf and Dumb." The schoolboys laughed; they liked this level of repartee; they exchanged winks and jumpots.

"Well, Bet isn't as bad as Jinny," continued her brother with an air of explaining his family with candour; "Jinny reads to poor old people in the hospital who can't get out."

"None of our successes are equal to his," said Jinny to Stephen. "He lectured on Kant to the Mechanics' Institute, and when he was half through he found himself alone in the room with the secretary, who is famed for his patience and politeness."

Chaloner laughed heartily. "I was but knocking the bottom out of materialism," he said; "and as

Stephen Calinari

each working man was converted, he got up and went out. It was very gratifying to me that the first half of my lecture was all that was needed."

They all laughed; Mrs. Coop contributed some genial anecdotes; Betty put in a modest word, and even the boys began to talk. They all exchanged buffets and pleasantries with abundant amiability. Stephen had never seen a family so exuberant, so vigorous in the first hours of the day. Often they were all talking at once; but from the fine mixed talk Stephen gathered that this was a farewell visit of Chaloner to his family. It seemed that he was often rushing down to embrace and insult his family before departing on some far journey. If he loved to be with his people, he loved better to be at the far ends of the world.

"He is our homing pigeon," said his mother, smiling fondly.

CHAPTER XVI

A COMRADE FOR THE ROAD

EVEN the famished Stephen had enough at last of eating and drinking, and could bear to turn his eyes from his plate to the charm of the open air. Behind the solid figure of the hospitable Mrs. Coop a great window stood wide open to the summer, hospitable as she; and the youth, happily restful after exhaustion, found an added touch of pleasure in the contemplation of a tangled garden enclosed in ancient walls.

A Comrade for the Road

"Mainly Bet's gardening," said Chaloner, "with spasmodic help from the boys. She calls it 'The Wilderness,' a fine name for neglect, and which seems to account for anything which happens to come up."

"It's charming," said Stephen, almost too lazy for speech.

It really was a delightful tangle, and the sunlight dwelt on it as if it loved it. Stephen had a wonderful sense of well-being; he was just in the mood to enjoy the place and the people. Bet had gone down into her garden; but Jinny lingered arranging flowers in the jars. Presently the boys came back into the room, cap in hand, half shy, half bold, and with pleasant schoolboy manner bade goodbye to the stranger.

"There go two first-rate boys," said Chaloner as the door shut behind them.

Their mother chuckled with a laugh most comically like her eldest son's. "He is weak about the boys," she said; "they ain't so clever as the girls."

"Best boys in England," said Chaloner. "Mat will keep wicket for the school next year, and in a few years more he'll be fit to keep wicket for the Empire. And as for Ned——"

"Ned is a dear," said Jinny from her vases.

"He is a little hero-worshipper," said his elder brother fondly. "I could see he took you for something wonderful. He has an instinct for what's good, and I take it you are something wonderful."

"I didn't look like it at dawn of day," said Stephen, smiling.

"No, sir; you did not. A tramp at dawn, at break-

Stephen Calinari

fast time a masher. Mother, are you aware that we have the honour of entertaining a young gentleman of the first fashion?"

"I wish I had put on my new cap," said Mrs. Coop, "and do have another cup of tea," she added to the man of fashion.

"And now tell us," said Chaloner, with arms comfortably on the table, "what is the matter?"

"The matter?" asked Stephen vaguely.

"You won't mind the mother and Jin?"

"I don't mind them."

"I really want to know what has gone wrong with you. My profession is curiosity. You are afraid I'll print it?"

"No," said Stephen; "I'd trust you if I was in a scrape. But it's nothing."

"Ah, then, tell it us," said Mrs. Coop.

Then Stephen told them shortly of his finding himself not far from their cathedral city, and of his sudden determination to surprise his friends at the Deanery; of his belated arrival, his repulse by a haughty parlour-maid, and his curling up like a stray empty dog in the shelter of the great cathedral.

Mrs. Coop laughed with a rich enjoyment, which shook the ribbons of her famous cap where they lay upon her bosom. "A friend of the Dean," she said, "sleeping out like a tramp. Oh, Chaloner, what a tale for the paper!"

"I hunger for it," said her son; "or I might blackmail Mrs. Dean by threatening to describe the sleeping arrangements of her guests."

A Comrade for the Road

"Do you know the Deanery people?" asked Stephen.

"Hum—yes," said Jinny doubtfully.

"They don't think much of the likes of us," explained Mrs. Coop. "In the precincts we represent Bohemia."

"Fancy that," said her son; "we Bohemia, we who are the typical Philistine middle class family!"

"But Hal?" asked Stephen; "he is my friend in the family. He is not so narrow as that?"

"He is a fine chap," said Chaloner; "a great clean chap who pulls it through. But he distrusts me; he don't think much of the Press. Fancy that! He always thinks I am going to publish his weight."

"So," said Jinny, more tartly than the others, "you see that you have come to the wrong place."

"Never mind Jinny," said Chaloner. "Jin's the family snob."

"It's not the wrong place for me," said Stephen, cordial and grateful. "I'll come again if you'll let me," he added, beaming to his hostess.

"That's right," she said, beaming in reply.

As Stephen told his tale, he had been keenly conscious of the part untold. Was it only yesterday that he was rejected, flung out on the highway with a broken heart? Broken victuals would have been more important but a few hours later—and now? Now, as he sat in comfort in that pleasant spacious, rather shabby room, he was conscious of a well-being which struck him as incorrect. The large content could not be ignored, but he thought that surely later

Stephen Calinari

he would feel more of the sentimental melancholy of the lovelorn, of the rejected. Sad as night, he could not feel nor drape himself in a becoming melancholy only for wantonness. There kept knocking at his heart a naughty pleasure in his unchartered freedom. He was magnificently free. He was young, unfettered, and there was life close to him, life with a myriad possibilities. He could rise from his chair, which for the moment was uncommonly comfortable, and go whithersoever he would. There were wings at his feet and a drum at his heart. What shall I do next? Where shall I go? These questions set themselves to the rhythm of his pulses. His eyes dwelt on Chaloner with a sudden envy. "You are just off somewhere," he said. "Where are you going?"

"To the Bosphorus."

"No?"

"Yes; I am in a bee line for the Bosphorus."

"Shall you see fighting?"

"If I'm in time, and I will be. But now that the Russians are over the Danube, and Gourko over the Balkans, I'm in a fever. Why don't you come too?" he ended with a laugh.

"I will," said Stephen.

Mrs. Coop gasped, and both she and her son looked at their guest open-eyed in wonder. Then they arrived exactly together at the idea that the youth was joking. They chuckled in unison.

"Ah, how I wish you could," said the special correspondent—"at your own expense, mind you; I can't afford a vice; I'm got disgracefully cheap.

A Comrade for the Road

They knew I'd go barefoot rather than not go at all."

"And so would I," said Mrs. Coop.

"Ah! I shouldn't dare to take you, mummy," said her son, patting her ample shoulder; "I couldn't keep you from fighting. You'd be heading a charge in that eternal cap of yours and a pair of ferocious jackboots."

Mrs. Coop did not deny it. She chuckled and sighed, and the sigh was for action which sex and figure seemed to forbid.

"But I mean it," said Stephen at the first pause.

"Mean what?"

"That I'll go with you if you'll let me."

"No? What? By George! But, I say——"

"I can afford it all right. I can pay for myself."

"You couldn't pay for your tooth brush," said Chaloner with a droll look in the eye.

"What's that?" cried Mrs. Coop delighted; but the young men did not even hear her question.

"Help me to London," said Stephen, "and you'll see."

"By the living Jingo," said Chaloner, who had been staring into Stephen's eyes, "it is true. He means it, mummy. Heaven dropped him at that cathedral wall for me! Can you start tonight? The balance of the day in London and away tonight?"

"Yes," said Stephen, with his soul in arms.

The leave-taking of Chaloner, who left them so often, was not a matter of fuss to the family. Bet, who had gone marketing, came home in time to hug him, and Jinny hugged him too, and it needed a nice

Stephen Calinari

observer to see that their eyes were brimming; and the embrace of his mother was only twice as long, and the tears on her cheek but little more apparent. Stephen felt as if he too were leaving home, and hoped (he was surprised at his own weakness) that Mrs. Coop would hug him also, but she only pressed his hands in a strong soft clasp and said again how glad she was that he was going with her son.

"Keep him out of danger if you can," she said, and laughed, but not with all her wonted heartiness.

At the station the boys appeared breathless but beaming.

"What, you?" cried their elder brother with a hand on each.

"Old Tosher let us," said Mat so soon as he could speak. "It was jolly decent of him."

"This chap is coming with me," cried Chaloner, shifting a hand to Stephen's shoulder. "Isn't that great?"

"I wish to goodness I was," said Mat; but Ned said nothing; he only looked with eyes shining. It was he who had the deeper longing to take the road with them.

The wish to be of the family came back to Stephen. "You must take me as an extra brother," he said to the boys. "You see, I've nobody—no brothers and sisters."

Mat laughed as at a pleasant joke; but Neddy, though he laughed too for answer, took it privately as an adoption, and said "Yes" under his breath. Ned's vein of romance, which he kept very close, took al-

A Start for Stamboul

ways the wholesome form of good resolutions, and he made a secret vow to practise his bowling more and to try twice as hard to be head of his class. He would like to show that he could do something; he would like Stephen to know it; he would like to be worthy of this brilliant new brother. He flushed with pleasure and purpose as the new brother pressed his honest little hand; and he was waving his cap as gaily as the sturdy Mat and calling out as cheerfully when the adventurers waved their hands from the departing train.

CHAPTER XVII

A START FOR STAMBOUL

"TELL me," said Stephen turning from the window of the railway carriage; "is your sort of family common in England?"

"Common as dirt," said Chaloner; "you are not acquainted with the great middle-class, I suppose?"

"I've been so much abroad," said Stephen; "and my own people are not typically English; and your family raise all sorts of questions in my mind. You don't mind my asking?" He asked the question eagerly, with a politeness almost foreign; and the other youth burst out laughing.

"Ask away," he said; "the Coop family have no skeletons in cupboards. I am all the skeleton there is to the Coop family;" and he drummed cheerfully on his chest like a gorilla.

"It seems to me," said Stephen, following his theory

Stephen Calinari

with ardour, "that that is what saves the country, just the lot of clean sensible wholesome families, doing obvious duties, with enough to live on."

"A sufficiency of ta hektos agatha—excuse my Greek," said Chaloner.

"After all the country is only a cluster of families; and if the families are rotten, the State can't be sound."

"Hear, hear!" was the comment which pulled Stephen up short by a suggestion of irony.

"But I don't believe," he said in a minute, "that such families are common at all. You are very clever people; and if cleverness is common in England, it is jolly well concealed."

"Then I can't persuade you that it lies like gold in the very middle of the middle class, in the belly of that Ibis who is safest in the middle, as the poet proclaims. If we are cleverer than other people—and I do think Jinny is devilish clever and Neddy may be—we are just a sane clean household like a myriad others; and I dare say you are right that that makes a wholesome State; but I do not theorise."

"Oh, no," cried Stephen with mockery; "and you lecture on Kant."

"A failure, as my relations pointed out to you. No sir! I note facts and leave deductions to brilliant chaps like Mr. Calinari. But you know the people at the Deanery. You can't call them clever; they'd resent it; but they are a God-fearing duty-doing decent folk. If we are respectable, what are they?"

"What I think," said Stephen, "is that we are led away by novelists. They can't make anything of

A Start for Stamboul

people who live along quietly. They study the abnormal family and so represent the diseased."

"Ah," said Chaloner; "that's your foreign training; you've been nourished on milk of Zola. Now we ain't a Zola family."

"Well," said Stephen with unusual feeling in his tone, "I am grateful for your family."

"Thanks! I am weak there. I do want my boys to do something in the world."

"You talk as if you were their father."

"I'm all the father they've got; I'm what the old bounder calls 'in loco parentis.'"

"And you are more ambitious," said Stephen, struck as by something amazing, "for them than for yourself."

"Oh yes," said Chaloner simply; "my ambition is to start them fair."

"I think that wonderful," said Stephen; "I can't imagine that. But it is fine, I dare say; and I am sure the boys will do well."

"I hope so," said Chaloner who had not noticed the other's admiration, admiration with a slight mixture of contempt. "I hope so," he said thoughtfully; "but it is a devil of a handicap. Boys of your sort, who have bread and butter assured, have an uncommon start."

"I shall be out of their way anyway," said Stephen, laughing; "before they are at the starting-point, I shall have won the race or broke my heart."

"You'll win, my boy," said Chaloner, and smote him hard upon the knee.

Stephen Calinari

Stephen would have talked more, being well in the vein and moreover gifted with vocal chords which made it easy for him to expatiate in closed vehicles; but Chaloner was somewhat tender in the throat and so took refuge in silence and in study of the daily press. He had purchased three papers of different political complexions.

In London the two friends parted. They had agreed to meet in the evening at the station whence they would start on their longer and more important journey. Meanwhile each had plenty to do. Stephen drove straight home intent on breaking the news to his mother, forming in his head the opening phrases which would reconcile her to his departure, even perhaps excite a spark of enthusiasm. But this persuasive eloquence was not to pass the barrier of his teeth. At his grandfather's stately door he learned that his mother had gone with his grandfather to pay a short visit in the country. The invitation had been even shorter than the visit; but there was awe in the butler's voice as he named the place. To be summoned thither by telegram was to some folk more exciting than more formal invitations to most eligible country houses for the inside of a week in far futurity; and Stephen smiled as he imagined the promptitude of the response of grandada.

Though this important visit would be short, it was clear that his mother would not be in London till her errant boy was well on the way to Stamboul; and Stephen decided in a moment that he would write his farewell. After the first natural disappointment he

A Start for Stamboul

was glad that he would not see his mother. He knew her unfailing good sense and the calm with which she accepted a fact which it was too late to change. He went to her own room and wrote at her own writing-table. He touched lightly on reasons, which she would understand and which made it "the right thing" for him to vanish for a time. With a smile on his lips he promised to be careful of his precious person, and by no means to forget his flannel under-clothing. "Dear soul!" he said aloud to himself as he wrote her name upon the envelope, and with a little laugh he kissed her dainty penholder ere he returned it to its tray. He was pleased with his letter, with his mother, with himself. He rang the bell and told the footman not to forward the letter but to leave it there, on her writing-table, till his mother returned. He also gave him some directions about packing and promised to be back in time to see to its conclusion. Then he ran downstairs, hailed a hansom for himself and made for his banker. From his banker he went to the place, which Chaloner had recommended for the things necessary for the traveller who leaves the beaten track, including a revolver which was to replace the little weapon which had affrighted the propriety of Oxford. He lunched at his club and returned home in time to eat a light meal there, as well as to review the packing and to add his newly purchased goods. When he joined his friend on the platform in the evening he felt that he had done well. He was as eager to be off as a child for his journey by the puff-puff. As for his love affair, if he thought of it at

Stephen Calinari

all (and his thoughts were quicker than the train), it seemed as if it had happened to somebody else or in a time long past. And yet only some thirty hours had passed since Lord Ranmore had kicked down the airy fabric of his hopes. So does time elude the measurement of man, as the learned have ere this observed.

During their journey Stephen spoke much and candidly of himself and of his career, so far as that had gone. He thought it right to inform his new ally on a subject of which he knew so little. So he ran through the story even from his childhood's hours; and Chaloner devoured it with greedy ears. The last of his confidences was of his ill-success in love; and this moved the warm-hearted friend to a flow of sympathy. Indeed he sympathized so warmly that Stephen began to feel himself an impostor. "Shall I tell you my last thought about it?" he asked at the end of their last talk on the subject.

"Do!" cried Chaloner eagerly, bending near to read his face; "do!"

"I think she has lost the chance of her life," said Stephen.

Chaloner broke forth into laughter and smote himself upon the chest for glee. "That's good," he cried, and presently added, "There's a divine insolence about you, Steve, that is great. You'll go far."

"I mean to," said Stephen Calinari, radiant, with a beaming smile.

"And I'll do your biography," said Chaloner Coop.

"Do you mean when I'm dead?"

"No, only when you are famous."

On the Bosphorus

"Ah!" said Stephen, and fell into a familiar line of thought. He had spoken lightly of death, which seemed impossible for him. He accepted as a fact that all men must die, as he did not deny that the world moves round the sun. Still life was his business; and his world was a firm place for his feet.

CHAPTER XVIII

ON THE BOSPHORUS

THE three tall windows of the spacious room open on to a wide balcony which hangs above the headlong swinging waters of the Bosphorus. On an afternoon of one of the first days of August, 1877, these windows were all closed, and the heavy air of the empty room was made more oppressive by blended scents of musk and of tobacco. The permanent furniture was heavy and handsome; there was something French and something Oriental in its style; and on and among these heavier pieces were the lighter Eastern things which travellers of wealth and taste gather in those parts; and most obvious everywhere choice preys of needlework; delicate colours embroidered on silk or camel's hair were spread on screens or backs of chairs or heaped in a huddled mass on the piano. A great basket-trunk had been dragged from an inner room and stood, with its big domed top thrown open wide, between a heap of folded female clothes which were ready to be packed and an equal heap of like

Stephen Calinari

goods which had been packed, pulled out again and flung pell-mell upon the floor. It was like a monument of indecision. Had you been standing in this silent empty room on that slumbrous afternoon, you might have distinguished a low monotonous sound in the apartment on your left as you faced the window, a sound which would have told you that the Princess was taking a siesta in peace; while from the bedroom on the other side came at intervals the sound of slippered feet shuffling hastily across the room accompanied by a low murmur of protestations, which rose now and then to a shriller note of complaint. It was in that room, which was indeed her own peculiar shrine, that Miss Hartup was rehearsing protests, as her manner was, which she might or might not find courage at a later hour to launch at her niece, Daria Fane. It was this provoking niece who presently opened wide the principal door of the empty drawing-room, and came quickly in from the brighter staircase.

Daria came in quickly, as she generally moved when she moved at all, but she stopped short almost on the threshold, glanced about her, tore off her gloves, and then advancing even more quickly, threw open all the three windows with impatient hands. She went out on to the balcony, deftly drew up the faded awnings, and let into the obscure apartment the deep rich sunshine of the day. A cool current of air moved from the Euxine on the moving Bosphorus, and this spread now into the new-opened space, filling the large heavily-scented room with a feeling of life. Daria breathed in the air with widened nostrils as she came

On the Bosphorus

in from the balcony, and so came face to face with a man who had followed her from the street.

"You don't mind my coming in?" he asked.

She gave a slight nod which might have meant anything. Her prominent brows were frowning, and her deep-set eyes still looked about the place with gloom. She pointed to the trunk and the clothes with a short scornful exclamation, then turned and with a livelier annoyance swept the heap of stuffs from the piano to the floor. "How often am I to tell them not to pile things on my piano?" she said angrily. From an obscure corner a rough-haired dog came sleepily and fawned upon her, and she absently fondled him while she frowned about her still.

The man stood watching her, noting the fine curves of her figure and the lights in the ruffled hair from which she removed the picturesque hat which she had designed for her embellishment.

"Come in or go out," she said to him, as she turned from the large gilt-framed looking-glass. "I can't bear men hanging in a doorway."

"Il faut qu'une porte soit ouverte ou fermée," he quoted, with an accent which betrayed that he was not a Frenchman; and he closed the door behind him. For the rest it would have been hard to determine at a glance his nationality. He was tall, straight and thin, with close-cropped, fine yellow hair, which hardly showed the grey, a short-pointed beard of a darker yellow, and a moustache which was allowed to grow longer, and drawn into unwaxed points by a common action of the bony hands. The open air and Eastern

Stephen Calinari

suns had painted his face with a deep reddish hue, in which the pale blue eyes made an effect almost startling.

"Don't quote French," said Daria; "it exasperates me—and do sit down."

He seated himself without a word, watching her and smiling. She was still standing, and she held up her hand to him to command silence while she listened. There was not a sound on the right nor on the left. At the noise of the girl's entrance or at the feeling of her presence the Princess had awakened on her bed in the one room, and in the other the rehearsal had ceased, and Miss Hartup had seated herself in the chair before her dressing-table and was noiselessly adjusting her fringe. The girl stood listening for a minute, graceful as a young huntress expectant of the horn of Artemis. Yet the next moment she seemed rather an Aphrodite, in a softer rounder beauty, as she sank on to a little low couch near the windows. She was expressive from top to toe. She turned her deep-set grave eyes upon the man.

"Why don't you go back to your men—to the fighting?" she asked, with a slight contempt in her tone.

"I don't know where they are," he said.

"I thought they were to join Suleiman."

"Doubtless they will," he said; "and so shall I when I can make up my mind to leave you."

"And you idle here when you might be fighting. I wish to heaven I might fight!"

He laughed low and comfortably. "I and my lambs are irregular and Asiatic," he said; "we don't

On the Bosphorus

mind fighting, but we prefer pillage. It is understood by Pashas that, if we happen to be there when there is a battle, we will fight, and, when we fight, we fight without gloves. But I would rather be here—even when you are out of humour. What has made you cross?"

"The imbecility of life," she said. She turned from him with a shrug of the shoulder. "What can I get? What can I do? I am two-and-twenty."

"A ripe age," he murmured, drawing out his moustache as if he made his smile with his fingers.

"All these years have I lived," she said, disregarding his comment, "and I am unknown, neglected, nobody."

"You mean that the Embassies ignore you."

"That, if you like, and more," she said. She looked angrily at the trunk and the huddled garments, and thence to the door of the Princess's room. "My aunt is connected with the best people in Russia," she said.

"Perhaps you had better sink that for the moment," he said, "at least until your Muscovite kin are in Stamboul."

"Do you think they will get there?"

"Yes," he said.

"Much you seem to care."

"Not much. I have become Asiatic. I have exhausted Europe. When the Sultan goes to the Euphrates, I shall apply for the captaincy of his body-guard. You don't know what a compliment it is to you that I linger so near to European civilization."

She seemed to take no interest in his speech.

Stephen Calinari

Indeed she was still thinking of herself. He realized this, and returned to that subject.

"What do you want?" he asked, looking at her studiously, smiling, drawing again the long moustache to a fine point.

"Life," she said; "life, and recognition and applause—alleys of men through which I pass indifferent, and eyes everywhere looking, questions and whispered answers where I come." She ended her speech with an abrupt laugh.

"Very boring, I should think," said he.

"You!" she said—"you care for nothing."

"Except you," he murmured, but she took no notice of the exception.

"All last winter," she continued, "I was slaving and slaving at my music—I have a box of compositions; and I know that somewhere behind a shop in London some vulgar young man is writing the opera which I shall never write. It is maddening. I sometimes think I am a fool, and shall end by being an old maid like that in there"—and she nodded angrily towards the room of Miss Hartup. "I want everything; I want fame; my appetite is boundless as the sea, and here am I, a girl with two aunts, a chit, cabined, cribbed, confined—ah!"

"What rum talk!" He never took his eyes off her, though she hardly ever looked at him.

"Shakespeare, or I think so," she said; "but I suppose you read nothing, you want nothing, you care for nothing."

"I want you."

On the Bosphorus

This time she did not ignore his words. She turned upon him quickly, her deep eyes alight with sudden fire.

"Did I not tell you again and again last winter that the condition of our friendship was that you should not make love to me?"

He looked at her with a contemplative air. "You don't really dislike it," he said at last quietly.

"I loathe it," she said fiercely. "It degrades me to the level of the first peasant girl. To me love is only a memory, and an odious memory. When I was a little fool, twelve years old, I felt my grand passion, and I felt it for a fool and brute. When I was sixteen I was romantic; I nursed and whipped myself into the romantic vein; I decked with all my fancies a young idiot with fine eyes because I needed a puppet for my fine feelings. Now I loathe the memory; I loathe the bare idea of love; I cannot bear to be touched."

"You are more of a woman than you admit," he said, with a covetous gleam of his light eyes.

She sprang up uneasy, indignant. "It is the condition of our friendship," she said with more emphasis, "and you may take it or leave it. I want to be famous, flattered, courted," she went on—"to be pointed at by the fingers of the crowd, sought by the great men of the world. The banging hands of the theatre!" She struck her own hands together. "I want to hear my opera sung by the greatest artists of the world, and to feel the triumph of each one of them as my own. Their voices should sound along my nerves, all mine, all mine! I want triumph."

Stephen Calinari

"The men will seek you," he said, ignoring the end of her tirade.

"But not to honour me."

He laughed grimly. "Since you are a woman, after all," he said, "you must be sought as the prize, the prey."

"Don't speak to me like that." She turned her deep eyes on him. "I am not afraid of you," she said.

"I think you are afraid of nothing," he said; "that is why I delight in you. I am a coward myself."

"You don't tell the truth."

"Who does?" he asked, laughing.

She never liked him so little as when he laughed. His laughter offended her ear; it had no tone, no resonance; it was like the chuckling note of some animal or the jingling of metal plates.

Perhaps it was time that this talk should end. It was broken by the entrance of Miss Hartup, who had renewed the curliness of the mahogany-coloured cluster which adorned her brow. Perhaps she also had touched the thin cheek bones lightly with colour, but their flush may have been due to a day sleep only. She came in neat and nimble, and held up her gold eye-glasses by their long handle.

"Colonel Moor!" she exclaimed, in a high voice and with a pretty air of surprise. "Moro Bey!"

Daria laughed scornfully. "You knew he was here," she said.

"Daria! And oh, what terrible untidiness!" she added, surveying the open trunk and the clothes which littered the floor; and then to the Colonel with a little

On the Bosphorus

fluttering laugh she said, "What will you think of us?"

"He will think you naïve," said her niece, who was standing at the piano touching notes thoughtfully with careful finger. "He also thinks all women liars," she added, after a few more notes.

"Daria!"

The Colonel was holding Miss Hartup's little hand in his. "I must go," he said.

"Go?" she asked with regret. "Where?"

"Tonight to my lodging across the water—tomorrow to find Suleiman—and the enemy, if I can't avoid him. And you? Does that trunk mean that you are going to take flight?"

"No," said Daria from the piano.

Her aunt looked at the girl with distress and then at the door of the other bedroom. "The Princess is so hard to move," she moaned. "Oh, do you think there is any danger?" she added with clasped hands. "And does the Princess, being a Russian, make a difference? I want her to call herself Mrs. Marlin."

"You would hate not to say 'Princess,'" said Daria, looking over her shoulder.

"You are safe enough," said the Colonel. "Perhaps the war won't come near you."

"Perhaps?" she cried.

"They say that twenty thousand of 'Mrs. Marlin's' countrymen were killed or wounded at Plevna the other day to celebrate their Emperor's birthday. So perhaps after all the rest will get back across the Danube."

Stephen Calinari

"What a dreadful loss of life!" cried the little lady, clasping her little hands with all the rings twinkling.

"Oh, dreadful!" he agreed with his clattering laugh. He crossed the room to the side of Daria Fane. He held out his hand, and she moved her right hand from the piano and laid it in his. He grasped it tightly, so tightly, that she looked at him with surprise and dawning anger. "I shall come back," he said.

"Oh, do," she said, trying to withdraw her hand.

"I shall come back for you," he whispered.

"Let go my hand," she said quickly, "and go. Goodbye—yes, goodbye."

As Colonel Moor went down the stairs, he passed at a corner a young man running up with a youthfulness which offended the elder man descending. With a movement which had become common, he drew out the right end of his moustache so that his well-shaped, big-boned hand came between his face and the glancing eyes of the quick youth. A deep-seated prejudice, which he would have denied, made the Colonel classify the youth as some sort of Bohemian or at least as somebody who had never belonged to a "decent" club; and he said to himself, not for the first time, that women were no judges of men, and that these roving ladies whom he had just left, were too apt to gather about them the mere tag-rag and bob-tail of mankind. It struck the Colonel as odd that he had any prejudice left; that was a familiar thought which always amused him. He went out smiling into the sunlight which

Daria

warmed him from all chilly thoughts, from all envy of youth.

The quick young man who bounded up the stairs had classified the Colonel, as he ran past him, as a soldier of some sort, and had left all thought of him behind as he hastened to renew acquaintance with the ladies who had excited his lively interest in other quarters of the globe. This eager youth was Chaloner Coop, who had but just arrived at Constantinople.

CHAPTER XIX

DARIA

IT is small wonder that the eye of so passionate a recorder as young Chaloner Coop had turned for its drama in this year, 1877, to the war-worn lands of the Sultan. The time of conference and admonishment had passed; the dodges and delays, which are termed the resources of diplomacy, had been laid aside; and reform, with Midhat the Reformer, had been banished to the uncongenial air of Asia. Before the end of April Russia had declared war and set her troops in motion. Two powerful barriers lay between the advancing Muscovite and the golden city of his dreams; these barriers were the Danube River and the grim range of the Balkans. In June the Danube was crossed in four places, while the Turkish commander-in-chief sat musing on strategy in his tent and displaying to restless European spectators a more than Oriental apathy. Having crossed the river the Rus-

Stephen Calinari

sians advanced towards the mountains; and as they came towards the ancient city of Tirnova, women and children came forth to meet them, bearing bread and salt, and priests descended singing, with banners borne before and sacred pictures. The first barrier had been crossed, and, as if to show the vanity of the second the brilliant Gourko threw himself with a mere handful of troops across the Balkans; and it seemed as if Byzantium, city of wonder and beauty, of the future as of the past, lay naked to his hand. It seemed a triumph rather than a war. But no sooner had prophets more experienced than our sanguine young journalist announced the immediate victory of the Czar, than events with all their inevitable irony made clear the vanity of prophecy. A Turkish army, too late to reach the city for which it had set forth, sat down by accident, or so it seemed, at a place neglected by the strategists; there they dug ditches and made ramparts of the earth; and there, before this Plevna of small importance some fifty thousand Russians were killed or wounded before its final fall.

On the day when the impetuous Chaloner leapt up the stairs to pay his respects to the ladies and passed on his way Colonel Moor about to set forth, or so he had said, in search of his irregular cavalry, Plevna still held before it the greater part of the armies of the Czar. Meanwhile the small force, which had crossed the Balkans, had fallen back again; the attack had become a defence; and a small body of determined Russians, strongly intrenched in the Shipka Pass, sought only to prevent the powerful army of Suleiman

Daria

from piercing in its turn the mountain range, rescuing the army of Osman at Plevna and compelling the invaders to retreat beyond the Danube. Prophets, who had foretold the immediate capture of Constantinople, made haste to proclaim the headlong retreat of the Muscovite beyond the frontier of the Turkish Empire; and the events were yet in the future which were to prove these prophecies as vain as those.

Chaloner Coop was received with effusion by Miss Hartup, and by Daria Fane with a rather careless but friendly air. "You will undertake our defence?" asked Miss Hartup, tinkling with chains and glasses as she almost ran to him and shook him by the hand. "Three unprotected women in a time of war!" she exclaimed, and then again asked, rattling her bangles as she clasped her hands, "Are we safe?"

"Safe enough!" said Coop cheerfully. "If they get to Constantinople—and that seems no certainty—they won't come this way."

"But Cossacks? Don't they range? I am so nervous about Cossacks—and Circassians for the matter of that. Anything irregular on either side is so alarming. And then there's Mrs. Marlin." She pronounced the name in an emphatic whisper and nodded to the door with a nod as expressive as Lord Burleigh's.

"Mrs. Marlin?" asked the young man with surprise.

She came close to him and whispered a name and title in his ear. "I am trying to accustom myself to calling her 'Mrs. Marlin.' Her own name is so

Stephen Calinari

dreadfully committal, so aggressively——” She laid her short pointed finger on her lips with a look half-arch, half-anxious.

“ Oh, the Prin——” he began, but broke off laughing at her cry of alarm.

Daria had shown no interest in the talk. She had turned back to the keyboard and was frowning thoughtfully on the notes. Chaloner glanced at her again and again, as he conversed with her aunt, and at last she seemed to remember his presence. She looked at him without turning her head. “ You have just arrived?” she asked; “ you came to us first?”

“ Can you ask?” he said heartily.

“ You were in Pera yesterday,” she said.

“ Now how did you know that? You have mysterious powers; I always said so—second sight.”

“ Every one has second sight nowadays,” said Daria; “ you might credit me with third sight or fourth, or what you will.”

Chaloner laughed with the hearty laughter of the Coop family. “ You are just the same,” he said; “ and that’s all right. I am always so afraid that I shall find you changed.”

“ I am the changeless East,” she said; “ I am monotonous, boring, but it is clumsy of you to say so.”

“ Oh I say. But you are the same in that. You always bullied me, squashed me flat.”

“ Your contentment is, and always was, insufferable.”

“ You can’t expect me to be sorry for that. I *am* a lucky beggar.”

Daria

She thrust out her lips and bent over the piano. He really surprised her. When they met first, she had thought his content with existence an affectation. She had looked on a young man without beauty, without wealth, without conspicuous relations, a young journalist who wrote, printed, and lost the treasure of his brain, who did not even sign his name, sent hither and thither at the whim of an editor, one of a crowd, of a herd, a nobody. She had glanced at him with pity and had smiled grimly with her girlish lips at his air of cheerfulness, of wonder at his good fortune. But in time she had learned that his pleasure in his lot was real; and now she held it genuine but stupid. It was stupid to be content with so little; it was bovine, it was British, it was absurd. Presently she shut the piano and turned to him more squarely. "And who was with you?" she asked.

"With me?"

"Yes; you *are* stupid," she said—"the other young man, he who was with you yesterday; you were just stepping from the bridge."

"Third sight! Fourth sight!" cried he, laughing, and "isn't he a good-looking chap?" he added with fervour.

She laughed low for an answer.

"He is also grandson, and the only grandson, of a millionaire. Calinari is his name."

"He looked English."

"If you were more English, you would think him a bit foreign."

"And hate him for it," she said with a short laugh.

Stephen Calinari

"Anyway he's English enough," said Chaloner, "though his grandfather is Greek or Greekish."

"Is he of the Faubourg?" asked Daria.

"Oh, we haven't got a Faubourg," Coop answered with his easy laughter—"only suburbs."

"Is he what you call a 'snob'?"

"Not a bit," cried Chaloner eagerly; "he's splendid. He's a new friend of mine, but I never met any one like him before; he is all cleverness from top to toe."

"A journalist too?"

"Oh no; he's a devil of a swell. He'll be awfully rich and go into politics and make things hum. I tell you he's a little wonder, unique, and he knows it at his age. Just think what a start! None of the experiments and doubts and false starts! He knows what he's good for and he'll go for it straight."

"Is the grandfather known, recognized—has he any position?" she asked with an air of indifference.

"Oh, Almanach de Gotha, yes! He gives dinners to dukes and duchesses and such. He'll give a dinner for the Prin——" He was stopped by a little scream from Miss Hartup, who was champing the bit, a little outside of the centre of interest. He nodded at her and said with a broad grin, "He'll give a dinner for Mrs. Marlin when you bring her to London next year; and I'll stand on the pavement and see you all go in. You won't know me then."

The young girl looked at him with scorn in her deep eyes. "How mean it sounds," she said, "and despicable. Dinners to dukes! I think all men are mean and vile, but you English are the meanest and vilest."

Daria

"Come, I say, you are English too."

"Not today," she said.

"Oh, my dear Daria," cried Miss Hartup expostulating; "your poor father was English, a thorough Englishman, and of course you follow your father, though of course on the mother's side you are more, more—well, we all know what that is;" and she gave a solemn nod to the bower of the concealed Princess.

To such platitudes the young girl did not even pretend to listen. She continued to look gravely on the smiling youth. "All you English care for," she continued, "is food and gold. You are the moneylenders, the universal usurers; and if you ever fight again, as my poor Russians are fighting now, it will be for your deferred interest."

"Why, Daria," cried Miss Hartup in amazement, "it was only yesterday that you were abusing the Russians and saying——"

"Don't tell me what I said yesterday," said Daria with terrible eyes.

"And oh, whatever are we talking about?" cried Miss Hartup again. "Didn't we agree not to speak of the—of the—of the gentlemen at present in this country. Anybody may hear us at any time. I live in a state of nerves which my doctor would, I know, declare impossible."

Chaloner Coop tried to soothe the nerves. He pointed out again that the Bosphorus lay not in the direct track of war; and that as a party the ladies were at least English enough to claim the protection of the Embassy at Therapia whither they could flee on any

Stephen Calinari

day. "I wish," he said to Daria with the air of a schoolboy protesting against punishment, "that you wouldn't abuse the English. We ain't bad, you know. We do go in for fairplay and all that, and——"

"Spare me the catalogue of national virtues, and bring your new rare bird, your Græco-British youth, to see me."

"He has seen you," said Chaloner.

"Then you saw me yesterday, and your pretended surprise was only the national hypocrisy."

"I was surprised," he said. "I was sure you didn't see us."

"As if *you* would know," she said. "Of course I saw you; I can see with the sleeves of my jacket. What did he say about me?"

Chaloner's face widened with a great grin. "Shall I tell you frankly?" he asked.

"You insult me," she murmured.

"He said——"

"Well? What?"

"Who is that dangerous female?"

Daria laughed with a fresh musical laughter. "Bring him, bring him!" she said, and waved her hand like a queen dismissing a courtier.

"Oh yes, I'm off," said young Coop, and having shaken each lady by the hand he ran away, grinning, as he came into the open sunlit air, partly for mere joy of life, partly at thoughts of the report which he would lay before the quick-witted Stephen.

An Introduction

CHAPTER XX

AN INTRODUCTION

THE welcome of these unprotected ladies delighted the happy Chaloner. For him it was another instance of the happy scheme of things, another proof of the truth of his belief that if one went about one's day's work and did not bother about pleasure, something pleasant was sure to turn up. When he arrived in the Golden Horn he had found matters not arranged to his complete satisfaction. The steamer lay at rest on the deep water like a sea-bird, stranger from the sea. Tall masts and spars were in the midst of the roofs of the city, and minarets beyond the masts. A wide deep harbour, it was like an enchanted haven, and above it the enchantment of the luminous high blue air. He had pinched Stephen's arm as he stood beside him on the tranquil deck, uttered a few cries and snorts at the pageant, and had then hurried ashore in search of letters and telegrams. These telegrams and letters had vexed his eager soul; for when he had read and re-read them, and impatiently considered the order of their sending out, he could make nothing of them but a command to stay where he was till he heard further. Now he was burning for headquarters anywhere, for the crash of guns, for the pageant of the fray, for the sounding-board of the thousand tongues of rumour, for the centre of things. But it seemed that the pen-and-

Stephen Calinari

ink strategists, whom he was to serve, could not yet determine where he would serve them best. The generals were not moving where the journalists expected them to move; and it was not sufficiently clear to Fleet Street where was the best chance of the most stimulating headlines. Coop felt that he was valued and that they were anxious not to waste his talent; that was delightful, but still he hated the delay. Why could they not leave the choice to him, asked his impatient soul. The capacious forehead of his editor rose before his mind's eye, and he seemed to see him and hear him as he weighed the pros and cons, himself the weightiest, conning the pros and prosing of the cons, as this subaltern had described him in a flippant moment, and coming to no conclusion. "I am like a monkey at the end of a chain," Chaloner had said to Stephen when he came back and laid before him the packet of conflicting missives.

"This monkey seems to be entirely ignored," Stephen had answered, rapping himself lightly on the chest.

"Oh, where I go, you go of course," said the sanguine journalist.

"I must have that clear," said Stephen. "I shall go to the Embassy."

"They'll be awfully busy and awfully bored."

"We pay them to be busy and to be bored," said Stephen. The appreciative friend had laughed and had opposed no more.

Their steamer had anchored at dawn; and it was in the exquisite clear light of the first morning of that mysterious world that the two friends had looked on

An Introduction

the grave ancient cypresses of the Seraglio point, the crowded roofs touched here and there to silver, the slender minarets, and eminent above many domes the dome of Saint Sophia. It was on the evening of that same day as they stepped into Pera from the long quivering bridge of boats which connects it with Stamboul, moving in richer lights and heavier air, a glow of the descending sun and shadows lying long, it was there and then that Stephen first saw Daria.

On the next day Chaloner Coop had been early afoot to find out where the ladies were living; and having gained this information he had embarked on one of the small steamers which pant and struggle against the sweeping current of the Bosphorus, and having dropped Stephen at Therapia, where he might vex and harry a hard-worked secretary at the Embassy, he had gone, as has been told, to announce his presence and proclaim his joy at meeting again these ladies whom he had met in more than one quarter of the globe. He came away with a renewed impression that it was amusing and amazing; and as to the young girl, as to Daria Fane, he could put it into no words less strong than that it was a high privilege to be in her presence, to listen to her voice. "It is a privilege, a privilege," he said emphatically to Stephen, when he rejoined him at the hotel. "You may smile with all your superiority, but wait, my boy, wait!"

"It seems that that is to be our lot. I don't want to wait."

"Nor do I. By heaven, no! But if I must wait a day or two, it is something to wait in such society."

Stephen Calinari

"Are they all so wonderful?"

"All intensely interesting, amazing, but of course it's the girl——"

"Oh, of course it's the girl," echoed Stephen, laughing.

"What?" cried Chaloner with round eyes. "You don't mean that you suppose that I—you don't mean that you suppose that she—why, she——" He stopped speechless.

"You mean that she is something out of the common."

"Out of the common!"

"A phoenix, a mermaid? What?"

"All that and more," said Chaloner gravely. "If she ever care to marry——"

"Oh, she'll marry," said Stephen. "You forget that I've seen your black swan."

"There is nobody in the world that she would think good enough," said Chaloner. Stephen laughed. "There is nobody in the world that is good enough." Stephen laughed again.

"There is nobody that is half good enough," said Chaloner.

Stephen laughed no more. A slight irritation possessed him at his friend's extravagant eulogy of another, and that other a woman. He shrugged his shoulders. The next morning Chaloner burst in on him as he was dressing; he was flushed, excited, and waving a telegram. Stephen took it from his hand and read that his friend was to join at once the headquarters of Suleiman Pasha, who was about to make

An Introduction

a vigorous effort to break through the Shipka Pass and raise the siege of Plevna.

"Can I go too?" asked Stephen.

"Oh, yes—of course—I think so. Make haste and dress and we'll go up to Therapia and see what they say at the Embassy."

At Therapia however it became clear that Chaloner Coop must start alone, and that the departure of his friend must be delayed. It appeared that too many travellers had been anxious to see some fighting; that it was doubtful if there were not too many extra correspondents of newspapers already in the field. The secretary, who received them, was polite and hopeful; he had heard of the parties of Madame Calinari; he was looking forward to his leave next summer. He hoped that he would be able to arrange matters for Stephen in a week or less. Chaloner expostulated, and suggested, and grew warm, but in vain. He was afraid that Stephen would think that he had brought him so far on false pretences. "I will wire to the Chief in London," he said to his friend, "and he shall see the Prime Minister; I will square them at headquarters as soon as I get there; I will get you there somehow. You must think me a fraud." He looked anxiously at Stephen, who ignored his anxiety.

"If I don't get leave from somebody, I shall go without it," said that brilliant youth, smiling and confident.

"Oh, don't do that," said the rising young diplomatist. "We could not be responsible for your safety."

"Nothing would happen to me," said Stephen lightly; but the secretary shook his official head.

Stephen Calinari

Outside the walls of the Embassy, Chaloner Coop repeated, enlarged, and emphasized his regrets. Stephen took them rather coolly; he was annoyed; he felt that, had he not trusted his sanguine friend, he could have arranged this matter better himself before he left London. As the eager friend expatiated, Stephen walked beside him with deaf ears, exercising his mind in the composition of a letter to a London acquaintance who should present an ultimatum to Coop's editor, and, if he could not so arrange his immediate advance to the front, should offer him freely to other editors more able or more enterprising. As he would offer to pay his own expenses and work for anything or nothing, he felt sure of a speedy response. His letter should be answered by a telegram. All ties of red tape should be politely but deftly unwound, and he would be promptly on the heels of his Coop. He began to feel the advantages of independence, of taking his orders straight from a London office. He would grasp easily this business of reporting, and do it a trifle better than the others.

"You will come and be introduced to the ladies anyway?" said Chaloner wistfully. "It's quite near and I shall have time before I start; and you see I promised."

"You promised to take me to the war," said Stephen drily.

"Ah! That is cruel, dear fellow. I never expected this red tape and rot. The moment I reach the army I'll see the Pasha and I'll make him ask for you. And you will let me take you to the ladies? Do!"

An Introduction

Stephen yielded gracefully to these entreaties. Indeed he had determined to be introduced. If he must wait, it would be well to know somebody there; and moreover he felt some curiosity about this young girl, whom the fervid Coop proclaimed musician, philosopher and woman of the world. He quietly put aside three-quarters of the talents and the charms as due to the temperament of a zealous admirer; but even then enough remained to yield him hope of amusement while he waited there. So he allowed himself to be taken where he wished to go, and accepted with renewed amiability the warm gratitude of his friend.

Stephen was a little disappointed with his visit. The interest of the ladies seemed to be exhausted by Chaloner Coop, his immediate departure, his probable visions, his possible dangers. Stephen felt himself like the friend of the hero in an old-fashioned play, which in the case of his friend and himself seemed a reversal of the natural rôles which was almost comical. Chaloner now and then made an effort to drag him to the front, but Stephen would not advance; he was polite, but ironical. Daria spoke little, and Miss Hartup much. When Chaloner had declared that they must go, and Stephen had risen silently at the summons, they were delayed by the tardy entrance of the Princess. She pushed her door open with her foot and came in smiling and smoking a cigarette. She was wrapped in an ample robe of some soft stuff, tea-gown or dressing-gown or nondescript, which did not hide the large curves of her figure. The absence of stays seemed almost aggressive. She looked lazy and amiable, but not

Stephen Calinari

stupid. Her brown eyes, which had been carelessly touched with some dark pigment, showed in their depth a slumbrous twinkle which promised humour. Her hair was thick, dark and glossy, parted in the middle and drawn smoothly into a lump at the back of the neck, like the plaited tail of a cart horse.

"This is Mrs. Marlin," said Miss Hartup, with nods and becks to Stephen.

"Mrs. Marlin" held out a large shapely hand. "'E is 'ansom," she said to Daria. She spoke English well, but with a strong foreign accent; her voice was deep and rich. Stephen laughed and looked an apology at the girl, who took no notice of the remark. He looked back at the Princess and was struck by her resemblance to a seal. One cannot imagine a seal at home in corsets.

Meanwhile Chaloner was saying goodbye, and Miss Hartup was tumbling over her words in the fear of omitting something which she was eager to say to him. When he escaped from her, she turned her eyeglasses on Stephen.

"*You* stay to defend us," she cried.

"I shall be honoured," he said, with a bow.

"It must be so hot in a Pera hotel," she cried; "worse, I am sure, than in the dear dark narrow alleys of Stamboul. I am sure you will be ill."

"I am never ill," said Stephen.

"Come 'ere," said the Princess deeply. "This piano is to us; but there is a room below."

Coop turned on Stephen eyes of warm congratulation. "You can start just as quickly from here," he

An Introduction

said; "and you are near the Embassy. I am so glad."

"I will ask about the room as we go out," said Stephen politely, with a look which passed over the three ladies but was ignored by the youngest.

"Is not she wonderful?" asked Chaloner as they went homeward.

"Like a seal," said Stephen.

"A seal! Miss Daria like a seal!" He was shocked by the comparison.

"I thought you meant the Princess. The girl did not give us a sample of her quality. She was silent as a Sphinx."

"You've hit it," said Chaloner thoughtfully. "That's what she is, a Sphinx."

"Bah!" said Stephen. "I'm sick of Sphinxes. There are almost as many Sphinxes as women." His quick mind flew back to England and to Elf. That English girl was comically unlike a Sphinx, and yet it seemed that he had failed to read her. "Hang women!" he said largely. "I want to see the fighting."

Chaloner burst out laughing. "You might get both together," he said.

Stephen smiled faintly; he often thought his friend's fun rather clumsy.

Stephen Calinari

CHAPTER XXI

ABOVE THE SWINGING BOSPHORUS

TWO days after their first meeting Daria and Stephen seemed to be friends of old standing; or rather they had drawn near, each conscious of a new influence, half pleased and half doubtful, while the outcome might be love or might be hate, but could not be indifference. It was morning, and they were together on the balcony, high above the Bosphorus. The air, which stirred the awning above their heads, went with the current far below and barred the Euxine to ascending ships. Stephen was sitting, a straw hat on his knee; his eyes bright with interest looked up at the girl, who stood, a dark supple figure, against the hazy golden light. It was an atmosphere of Titian. She had already shown to him more than once an amazing faculty of reading his thoughts. She looked at him now with a sidelong glance and said with a smile—

“That is why I like it.”

“Like what?” he asked with a smile quickly responsive.

“The Bosphorus is such a background,” she said with an artful simplicity.

He laughed and said, “What an object for the ancient Bosphorus!”

“It likes it,” she said; “it takes me in and I take it in. I am stronger, cleverer, happier for it; it was meant for me and I love it.”

Above the Swinging Bosphorus

She stretched her arms out towards the ruffled waters far below her. It was a movement of that sinuous grace which Stephen thought so far from English women. It made him think of English girls, who turned their square shoulders when they turned their heads towards him and moved a right arm as if it held a lawn-tennis racquet.

"It is the right place," she said, "and the right time. The air trembles with events and with emotions. If I listen with all my ears, far off I hear the murmur of the war, the thud of marching soldiers, the drone of guns."

"How many hundred miles away?" asked Stephen, smiling.

"How English and how dull!" she said. "I always think of English statesmen reading statistics, statistics—and shaping an Imperial policy to the price of hogs."

"Hogs are important."

"They are disgusting," she murmured. "Do hogs also follow the flag?"

Stephen laughed. She asked no further answer; her mood had changed. She was leaning lightly on the railing of the balcony, and with her head turned northward. She seemed to enjoy with a fine luxury the movement of the cooler air. Presently her lips parted as if to drink the refreshment of the north, and then they moved in a rich murmur—

"Like to the Pontic Sea,
Whose icy current and compulsive course
Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on
To the Propontic and the Hellespont——"

Stephen Calinari

"By George, that's fine," said Stephen when she paused.

"Do you know who made it?" she asked.

"Oh, come, I'm not so illiterate as all that. It's Shakespeare."

"We foreigners read Shakespeare," she said, "but you English only swear by him. You brag about Shakespeare and about the Bible, but a friend of mine at the German Embassy told me that you read neither."

"You are English," he said; "Daria Fane! All Fanes are English. You must take your share of the national faults."

She looked at him thoughtfully. "I don't think I shall be English," she said; "I would rather be Byzantine."

She still looked down at him quite gravely. He thought her beautiful. The drowsy light under the awnings seemed her fit atmosphere; the yellow awnings had been burnt almost colourless by many suns.

"In England you have no religion," she said.

"Oh, come, I say," said he; "it is the thing we care about—that and politics."

"You only care for the fighting," she said. "You have a thousand sects and no religion; so my German friend told me."

"Don't believe him," said Stephen; "believe me. And be English," he added more earnestly. "It is best in the long run; it pays."

"It pays," she echoed; "yes, that is English. Are you rich?"

Above the Swinging Bosphorus

"I have enough," he said, smiling.

"Don't say you are content," she cried. "Enough! It is the vilest word in the dictionary."

Her attention seemed to move from him again. "'Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on.' Players' rant. A man half strangled with jealousy doesn't use simile; yet it is fine too. To keep straight on and seize and hold." She clenched her shapely hand. "Chaloner said that you were rich," she said presently, "and money is more and more power, and that you were clever, and that you would have a career."

"Chaloner!" he repeated thoughtfully.

"Is that improper?" she asked. "I like first names."

"I wish you would call me by mine."

She ignored this request. "And I like Chaloner," she said; "he enjoys life; he is always at the play—not the machine-made things of the theatre, chopped into lengths with a bang at the end of each—but the intricate strange drama of life, woven before us and shot with a thousand dyes."

"He would like that phrase," said Stephen; "he would jot it in shorthand on his cuff."

"Is all that true which he said of you?" she asked.

She asked him about himself as calmly as if she were asking one of the Magnall's Questions, which had helped her English education. The strange thing was that he was so dull in seizing the opportunity of talking about himself. He was looking at her, thinking of her. She seemed to absorb the interest available at the moment.

Stephen Calinari

"What brought you here?" she asked, still insistent upon him.

"To see life," he answered.

"If you go up there," she said, nodding northward, "you will see death."

Her voice had a flexibility and variety which moved him. He caught himself shuddering, and laughed.

"There is a slight chill in this delightful air," he said.

"If you are afraid of it, go in."

"I would rather stay with you."

"That sort of thing has been said to me before," she said drily. "Chaloner said that you were clever, very clever, and original."

"He is an enthusiast."

"He is refreshing sometimes." She stretched out her arms and yawned with a large freedom. "I wish I could go to the war," she said; "if anything could persuade me to be a man, it would be that common power of starting off alone. A girl with two aunts! It is absurd as a French farce. Two clogs! But why did you leave England? Something there made you go. What?"

Stephen laughed, and then wondered at his laughter. That which had sent him forth was a girl's refusal to marry him; that seemed a strange subject of mirth. It was strange, he thought, that he had fancied himself in love. Why did he know now more clearly than before that he had felt for Lady Elfrida a mere passing tenderness, that he had recognized her charm and thought it wise to yield to it? That was true; but

Above the Swinging Bosphorus

he had thought himself in love; and now he knew that he had not loved. Why did he know it now? Thus he was asking questions of himself. Was it possible that he was beginning to realize what love was? He had arrived at that question.

"What are you thinking about?" asked the girl, smiling curiously, with drooped eyelids.

He flushed and laughed again, but spoke no word.

"I can guess," she said; "it was a sentimental complication—a disappointment as they call it." She made a face of mockery as she suggested this.

"How did you—why did you think that?"

"I divine it."

Her eyes met his with no sign of fear. A stronger movement of the air shook the awning over her head and made her face mysterious. He felt his heart throb; he wanted to speak, but for a moment could not trust his voice. He was afraid; he said to himself that this would never do. Of all men he was the last who should fall in love with a foreign woman. If she were not foreign, she was not English enough for him. He would have to persuade people, and especially constituents, that he himself was English. In a moment he had a fleeting vision of Daria in sables on a political platform; the voters would think her a foreign serpent, and what would she think, and possibly say, of them? Would she taunt them with the price of hogs? He began to laugh again.

"Do you do me the honour to laugh at me?" she asked, amiably indifferent. "When do you expect to start for the Balkans?"

Stephen Calinari

"I might get a telegram any day after tomorrow."

"I shall be sorry."

"Will you?" he asked, and was surprised by the sudden fervour of his tone.

"Not inconsolable," she said quietly, looking down upon the ruffled waters.

"I should like a little time," he said; "it is very pleasant here and now. Are you so determined not to be English, Miss Fane?" He emphasized the English name.

"Is not the horror of being called 'Miss' enough to prevent? I hate 'Miss'—'Mees'—it is a French caricature."

"Are you so Russian, then?"

"They are at least capable of an idea," she said quickly, "and of dying for it. They fight to free Slavonic kinsmen from the Sultan; they fight and die for an idea—not for a flag and trade to follow!"

"For an outlet to the Mediterranean?" suggested Stephen.

"Oh, statesmen and diplomatists!" she said. "I don't like educated Russians; they are French without wit. But the peasants are good, ignorant, nomadic, blindly pushed on, but capable of good—of faith."

"Are you a democrat?" asked Stephen, smiling.

"I hate labels," she said. "As for this Eastern Question, Mazzini was right. To check Russia the Balkan States should have been freed and banded together for mutual defence, and the kingdom of Poland should have been revived. Now it is too late. The task has been left to Russia, and she will do it."

Above the Swinging Bosphorus

"I shall know more about that when I see the Shipka Pass," said Stephen.

"Oh, talk of other things," she said; "of balls and parties, and people and absurdities, or rather don't talk, but come into breakfast."

The ladies lived in the foreign fashion, and this meal in the large shaded room was very pleasant to the hungry youth, who had eaten nothing since waking but a roll and coffee. The Princess, wrapped in another loose informal robe, looked on him till he felt almost shy; Miss Hartup twinkled and chattered, while little lights were thrown about the room by the moving eyeglasses; and the young girl, amiable, witty, clever, pleased with no effort. She was in her most sociable mood. The presence of the clever handsome lad kindled her interest. She touched lightly on many things. Stephen wondered at her. She looked so young, almost like a child, and yet she seemed to have read as many books as a bleary-eyed scholar in for "Greats"; and if she looked like a child at one moment she looked at the next a mysterious wise woman. He could not read her deep eyes when the shadow was on them. And then he remembered that he was leaving out her greatest talent; he remembered the words which a great master of music had said of her, and which Chaloner had repeated to him. It seemed possible that she would grow to be the woman who would prove that a woman might compose music worthy of a man and a master.

"Are you not taught in England that it is rude to stare?" she asked.

Stephen Calinari

"Yes," said he, "but I can't help it. You are wonderful."

The Princess indulged in a rich low chuckle.

CHAPTER XXII

IN THE HOUSE OF MORO BEY

ON the next morning Stephen was again in attendance on Daria. They crossed the Bosphorus to the Asian shore, carrying with them an agitated Miss Hartup and an armed and wily dragoman. Miss Hartup was twittering with apprehensions and dared not put up her glasses lest she should see the hordes of Asia descending upon her. However, as her fears subsided, her tremulous love of art began to rise, and no long time had passed before she was established on a rickety camp stool in a deserted street making a wobbly sketch of an unsteady wall in muddled water-colours. She insisted that the dragoman should stand on guard close behind her back, keeping a watchful eye on all sides for ruthless marauders; and, as she dabbed, she addressed to her protector frequent questions, as Fatima to Sister Ann. The wily dragoman made use of all his intelligence to keep the lady's fears at the right level, lively enough to maintain her gratitude to himself, but not so lively as to cause her flight into Europe.

Daria, bored by her attendant aunt, left her to her fearful joys and wandered up the silent village with Stephen at her side. Going forward with no purpose

In the House of Moro Bey

they came to a narrow alley or passage on their right, which looked obscure and cool; and Daria proposed to explore it. Stephen felt it his duty to demur; but the girl, paying no attention to his objection, immediately proceeded on her way, and the youth could but follow where she led. He was beginning to follow with a strange docility. It seemed a village of the dead, and the dim alley led straight between blank walls behind which fancy might picture imprisoned women, lush gardens, murmuring fountains and all the easy properties of the sentimental tourist. Daria had stopped, hopeless of finding further interest in this narrow way, when a low door, which she had not noticed in the straight shadowed wall beside her, opened suddenly and a tall man, stooping through the doorway, almost struck her as he came out. For a moment he seemed about to step back; the next moment he caught her by the wrist, but instantly, as he saw the youth behind her, he loosed his hold and laughed. Stephen saw nothing but that a man had appeared who in the shadow seemed to be European. Daria was angry, but quite calm. "You have no manners," she said. "And what are you doing here?" she added presently.

"Living here," he said.

"You said you were going to the front."

"I am safer here," he said.

"Coward!" she said quietly.

"Oh yes." Though he spoke to her, and now with his most polite tone, he looked beyond her, peering at the young man who had followed her. "Then you had not come to pay me a visit?" he asked with regret.

Stephen Calinari

"I neither knew nor cared where you were."

"Cruel!" he said; "and won't you introduce me?" he added after a moment.

"Colonel Moor," she said—"Mr. Stephen Calinari."

She did not mumble the names as if their owners were bound to be ashamed of them, which is the modish fashion of Britons. Yet was she content to name them clearly; she gave no further information to either nor showed the faintest sympathy with their mutual interest. She turned away and began to go back along the alley.

"Won't you come in and see my garden?" asked the Colonel, looking after her.

"No, thank you. I am going to take Aunt Caroline home."

"Won't *you* come in for a few moments?" asked the Colonel of Stephen.

Daria stopped and looked at the younger man, whose eyes sought hers for guidance. "Stay," she said; "you will find it interesting and him—Colonel Moor, Moro Bey, of Irregular Turkish Cavalry; it is good copy for your new profession."

"Your new profession?" asked the Colonel of Stephen.

"I am a war correspondent," said Stephen.

"You have not got there yet," said the Colonel.

"Nor you," said Daria looking back over her shoulder.

"I start tonight," he said.

"Then we shall look for you at luncheon to-mor-

In the House of Moro Bey

row," she said. "And you," she said to Stephen—"we shall see you this evening?"

"Oh yes," said Stephen.

"But you won't see me," said Moro Bey, "either today or tomorrow. I *am* going this time. Good-bye!" He strode after her and grasped her hand, whispered some words, and then added aloud, "I shall return and lay my laurels at your feet."

"Laurels!" she echoed scornfully.

"Or loot," he said and laughed.

The two men watched her as she moved away up the narrow path, and when she was no more to them than a little dark figure against the patch of vivid light which marked the end of that narrow alley, the Colonel, taking hold of Stephen's arm, pushed him gently through the little doorway. There was a small garden of neglected flowers and a little fountain playing lamely, and beyond this a room which showed signs of western occupation. Here stood a writing-table with papers on it and a shabby armchair with a cigar-box open beside it; a hunting crop lay across the faded divan. The younger man looked around him with quickening interest. Though he wished that he was still beside the lady, he was glad to be here. He felt a personality which promised interest. He was not sure if he liked the man; he had disliked him five minutes before when he saw him pursue the girl, take her hand in a manner almost masterful and speak low to her—probably about himself. Daria had shrugged her shoulders and the Colonel had laughed—probably at him. Albeit he felt interest in this Moro

Stephen Calinari

Bey; the mere fantastic title aroused interest. He was meditating some questions which should draw this new acquaintance into useful self-revelations when the new acquaintance began to talk without the prompter. Talking gaily he pushed Stephen into the easy chair and pointed to the cigars. Conversation began to flow without break or pause; but ever the easy stream of talk ran more and more full with the affairs of Stephen, his past and future, his relations, his prospects and his hopes. In a short time the older man knew much of the younger, but the younger knew no more of the elder than he had inferred at the first glance. And yet he felt that he knew him well, and described him to himself as the absolute man-of-the-world. He was so keenly interested by this complete being that he forgot to think of Miss Fane. It was amazingly stimulating the mere contact with this man of large experience. When they had passed lightly over the boy's home and college, his prospects and his aims, the talk touched at last the ladies of the Bosphorus, and especially the beautiful Daria; but this subject checked the ready talk of the youth, and the Colonel dropped it instantly. He sat at his table fingering the papers before him or the end of his moustache and smiling on the young man at ease in the chair.

"I see that you are very cynical," he said.

"I try to see things as they are," said Stephen with satisfaction.

"Quite right!" said Moro Bey. "If you can see things as they are at your age, you will go far. Most

In the House of Moro Bey

clever boys see nothing but goddesses in clouds or Utopias and all that."

Stephen laughed as if he were being tickled, as perhaps he was. He lit a cigarette, which he preferred to the large cigars of his host.

"You are sure you have no prejudices?" asked the Colonel. "Would you rob a church and say your friend had done it?"

Stephen laughed. "I see no likelihood of having to answer that question," he said.

"One never knows," said the Colonel. "I know this," he added—"that to succeed in life you must see clearly the next thing which you want, and must let nothing prevent you from grasping it—nothing."

"Nothing?" asked Stephen, smiling.

"No scruple of any kind," said his mentor, smiling in answer. "Take me for instance."

"Ah, yes," said Stephen with curiosity and thinking suddenly that he had not made much progress in knowledge of his new friend.

"Oh, it's nothing," said the Colonel—"a mere matter of sport last winter, but it shows what I mean. Duck was my immediate object. I lay out on the marshes down that way," he continued, nodding vaguely towards the coast of Asia Minor. "I had been waiting a devil of a time when I happened to notice in a ditch on my right something which looked like a dead body. It was growing lighter, and presently I made out that it was the body of a youth lying face downward. I was just going across to see if he

Stephen Calinari

were alive or dead when I saw far off against the sky my ducks. I had two guns and I got three ducks, and the third fell plump on the back of my friend in the ditch. He never stirred, and so I knew that he was dead. Would you have gone first to the fellow in the ditch and lost your chance at the duck?"

"What did you do with him—it—the body?" asked Stephen.

"Picked the duck off him and left him there."

Stephen shivered. Then with a quick glance at the Colonel he cried out, "I don't believe a word of it; you made up the whole story."

"It's what you call a parable," said Moro Bey.

"I was sure it wasn't true," said the youth with relief.

"You are right. I have not shot a duck since I was a boy on the Potomac."

"You are American?" asked Stephen with renewed interest.

"I was born in Virginia," said the Colonel; "but my mother was a Creole and my father was an Englishman."

"I knew an English Moor," said Stephen, "but I think he had an 'e' at the end of his name."

"I haven't an English relation left alive," said Moro Bey.

Colonel Moor's servant now came in and announced that breakfast was ready, and they went into a larger and barer room. To be attended peacefully by a lean fierce man, whose broad sash was adorned with a little armoury of knives and pistols, was a new experience

In the House of Moro Bey

to Stephen, who, while he ate with good appetite, amused himself by making journalistic phrases descriptive of the scene and people. He was making experiments in his new art. Now and then recurred to him the question whether his host were really so free from all scruple as he said. Had he no religion, no moral code? Was that the secret of success in life? Had this strange man succeeded? How old was he, and how far forward had he got? A Colonel, a Bey? These were not signs of any great eminence. And these quarters were rather shabby, though the attendant with silver-mounted panoply made a goodly show. But perhaps the aims of this puzzling person were other and were attained. He had never met a man who puzzled and interested him so much.

After breakfast they went back into the other room and Colonel Moor lighted a cigar. "You are very temperate, I see," he said to Stephen.

"I never drink wine till night," said Stephen.

"I never drink it at any time," said the other. "I am a follower of Mohammed;" and he laughed his clattering laugh, which was like tin plates falling in a heap. He opened a drawer and produced some cards. "Do you play *écarté*?" he asked.

Stephen rather admired his own play at this game, which he had learned that he might oppose his grandfather on quiet evenings at home; but nevertheless after an hour of fluctuating fortune he had lost more than five pounds.

"No more!" said the Colonel, pushing the cards into the drawer. "I should win nine times out of ten

Stephen Calinari

with you. I'll give you a bit of advice too. Never play with a man whom you don't know."

"I trust you," said Stephen, but not gaily. He did not grieve for the loss of the money, but the comment on his skill vexed him a little.

"You are wrong," said Moro Bey; "trust nobody, unless you have him tight under your thumb. And drink neither wine nor spirits morning or night; so shall you have all other men at a disadvantage."

Stephen laughed again, but the Colonel eyed him gravely. He led him to the door which opened into the narrow alley and took leave of him with an air of courtesy and kindness.

CHAPTER XXIII

A FIRST STEP

ON the evening of the same day anybody, who enjoyed the privilege of following Miss Hartup to her bower, would have found that lady wrapped in a primrose-coloured dressing-gown which was adorned with much lace and some ribands. She lay prone upon her bed, enduring one of her headaches, which, it is superfluous to add, differed from those of all other female sufferers. She was proud of her headaches and defended their special quality with the ardour of a patentee. She was proud of her remedies also and, as she now lay in a comfortable obscurity, her intellectual faculties were occupied by the two tumblers, each with its tablespoon, which stood beside her bed.

A First Step

It was of the first importance to remember from which she had sipped last and to bear in mind the future moment at which she must sip from the other. There lay Caroline Hartup, like an Ariel with a dislocated wing, intent upon her medicinal sips, while in the sitting-room next door it is to be feared that the two companions of her travels enjoyed the larger calmer atmosphere which the absence of that most vivacious lady rendered possible.

"Your Aunt 'Artup is a goose," said the Princess amiably.

Daria had no wish to dispute the verdict, which was familiar to her ear as How-dye-do. She was seated on the floor with the back of her head against the sofa, on which her wiser heavier aunt reclined. She was a little tired, a little weary of the sun, and she gave herself with a voluptuous lassitude to this hour of early evening which has so delicate a charm. Through the wide-open windows came the fragrance which the declining day leaves as a legacy, a tenderness, a half-melancholy charm.

"Talk to me," said Daria drowsily.

The Princess laid down the end of her last cigarette. "It is for you to talk," she said, and she quoted after a pause, "'Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king.'"

"But you are not foolish, and I am not wise. I feel capable of folly, of egregious folly."

"Of falling in love, perhaps?" asked her aunt.

"What is falling in love?" asked the girl thoughtfully.

Stephen Calinari

The Princess smiled inscrutably. She remembered and she sighed; and then she uttered words of wisdom. "Don't ask; don't question; don't pull it to pieces. Is it perhaps this young elegant who pleases you?" she asked after a silence.

"No one pleases me. I am like that. I do pull it to pieces; I can't help it. Yesterday on that balcony——"

"Oh, balconies!" murmured the Princess. "There is always a balcony." She rolled the word in a deep rich tone with a strong accent on the second syllable.

"Many balconies and few Romeos," said Daria.

"And what happened on your balcony?"

"We were talking, and then——"

"Then?" She smiled largely as she awaited the answer.

"Then I could feel your young elegant grow tender, more tender, almost human. I liked it; I loved it." Her voice trembled with feeling.

"Ah!" said the Princess with large sympathy, which yet seemed like a sigh.

"I loved *it* not *him*. If he loved me, I should warm myself at it. I am cold; I have a heart of ice."

Her aunt laughed low and comfortably. "My child," she said, "you are warm. Make no mistake; your heart is warm, perhaps dangerously hot. But you analyse, child of your generation, you pick to pieces, you dissect; that chills you."

"How can I help it? In this ridiculous balcony I was listening, a little amused, indifferent—you know."

"Yes, I know; you were flirting." She rolled the

A First Step

"r" of the word and gave it an air most foreign, which added to its attraction.

"Then there came something into his voice, and I was thrilled as by certain notes of the violin. I looked away. I caught my breath. Then I said to myself that I was a fool, that I would not be afraid to look at him. I turned calmly to look into his eyes, and instead of looking into his eyes I find myself inspecting—what?"

"What?" echoed the Princess.

"The skin of his nose."

The aunt rolled a little over on the sofa in the languid effort to see the niece's face. She was shaken with silent laughter as she moved. But the niece was not amused; she was indignant.

"Is it amusing to see things like that?" she asked.

"Is it rough? Is it ugly?" asked the Princess with interest.

"No," said Daria; "it is fine for a Briton. Have you not noticed that in all Teutonic people, even in the most refined, the skin of the nose is coarse? It is like a face-sponge. Do you think I *wish* to see such horrors? I would like to see all things rose-coloured. When you were a girl, did you see all things in a mist of rose colour? Did you see nothing in the young men who loved you but his adoring eyes? Did you see him *tout simplement* and love him?" She half turned to peer up at the face of the elder woman, who shook her sleek head slowly.

"It is so long ago," she said. "I look back what your English call a devil of a way."

Stephen Calinari

"My English!" said Daria petulantly. Then she returned to the question which interested her. "But you remember," she said; "of course you remember."

"I have had two 'usbands, and—vell, I am an old woman and am grateful for peace. Some one asked of Sophocles, when he was old, if he regretted the loss of love, *le temps des amours*, and he said he was like a prisoner freed from a cruel gaoler or a sick man cured of a fever, or some such thing. I am like Sophocles, only not so famous. But these sayings are for old women and old poets. You, my child, have before you the tyrant and the fever." She passed her plump brown hand round the girl's head and laid it against her cheek. "Varm," she said, "your blood is var-r-rm."

Daria's lips curled with contempt. "Blood!" she muttered.

"You like this youth?" said the Princess, encouragingly.

Daria replied only by a gesture of the hand. "Consider this," she said after a minute. "Here is summer and sunshine and sweet air, a romantic place where Europe and Asia take hands, a balcony—everything. The scene is set; and there am I alone, in my best looks, heart-free, waiting. At this time and place there enters a young man, an appropriate young man. How can I tell if I care for him? If I met him elsewhere should I care a pin for him? If another young man, totally different from this young man, had come to me here and now, when the scene is set and I am in the

A First Step

heroine's vein, should I not have liked him just as well?"

"If and if and if," said the Princess. "Little vivisector, you pull to pieces the beauty of your life. I knew this boy's grandfather."

"Did you? You never said so." The tone of her voice was changed; it had a new variety of interest.

"You never asked me. He was my good friend and he made some money for me. He has made much money for himself. All around this Levant he is very strong and very rich. He has peered into a thousand things with his little bright eyes."

"And he has no son?" asked the girl.

"Only one daughter, who is the mother of this young elegant."

"So Chaloner said."

"Yes, so Chaloner said."

"And position? Chaloner would be no judge of that," she added with decision.

The Princess tapped the face which was still turned from her. "In England," she said, "every day money is more and more. And the boy is clever; he will rise. He is not of those who are kept down."

"Yes, he is clever," said Daria thoughtfully, "and confident. With money he must rise. Should I care for that? What would it mean for me?"

"Again you will pick it to little bits," said the Princess. "It would mean much for you."

"It would be to stand, beautifully dressed, at the head of a great staircase, to receive a crowd, to be the wife of somebody. I would rather be famous myself."

Stephen Calinari

"You would be famous," said the Princess, smiling kindly.

"Not for what I had done. If I could make a great opera—music and drama and poetry and scenery and dresses and——"

"And do the lights and dance the ballet," said her aunt, laughing. "Not even that would satisfy you. You are a daughter of Danaus and cannot fill your sieve. Not to be Czarina nor Madame Patti would content you. You must take a part, a part of what you wish. The part is greater than the whole."

"I want the whole and more."

"You want a man," said the Princess.

"Bah!"

"You are certain that your heart is free—quite free?" asked her aunt in a new tone.

Daria laughed.

"You have no childish fancy for the dangerous Colonel?"

"I hate him," said Daria.

"That too is dangerous; indifference is safer. Now take advice of your old Russian aunt. Take this young man; take him as the first step in life."

"A step! A first step! Would it not cost too much, your *premier pas*?"

The door opened. "Will Madame receive M. Calinari?" asked the polite dragoman.

"I can hear the first step," said the Princess, chuckling. "Pray Monsieur to enter," she said to the dragoman.

Music of Daria

CHAPTER XXIV

MUSIC OF DARIA

STEPHEN entered that pleasant room glad at heart. All things conspired for his great content. He entered like the herald Mercury, new-lighted, with wings still quivering from flight. His bosom's lord sat lightly as Romeo's heart in exile. He was not only fortunate, but realized with keen appreciation how fortunate he was. His past seemed a mere training for that hour. He felt his own health and joy in his vitality; he felt how good a thing it was to be young, strong, and with that sufficiency of external goods which ensures a free movement in the world. This to him was the value of money, not luxury nor ostentation, nor the accumulation of things which are each an object of solicitude. "How pleasant it is to have money!" he might have sung with Clough, if he had not been possessed by a silent song of joy because he was alive and alert and all his soul in arms.

He was excited, but not beyond the degree of pleasure. He came straight from his first interview with Colonel Moor; he had never met so interesting a man. Under that influence it seemed to him that the world was full of interesting people who would be glad to know him; and below this was the consciousness, though half ignored, that he could hold his own even with him or any man. When a crisis should come, he need not fear to measure himself with any

Stephen Calinari

man. He did not think that he would ever meet a man armed at so many points as Moro Bey; yet even him he did not fear. Indeed the lad was excited by the heady wine of life, jubilant and keen. He entered the room of the ladies with delight, and with no doubt or fear. He was sure that he need not fear the influence even of this provoking girl. It could not be that he, who was the peer of any man, should not be equal to a girl. Moreover the ease with which he had left her that morning, at the invitation of the Colonel, reassured him; it was a small matter, but a proof that he was free, if proof were needed, which was in itself absurd. She was delightful; she was charming; she was of the wealth of the world. Now, before he went forward to the fighting, he would gain all that he could from her stimulating society. Confident he would take his hour. The next moment would come his marching orders, and his bridle rein would shake with his adieu for evermore. Young Mercury would be afoot again, and winged for the Balkans. To the two women seated in the veiled light the entrance of the youth was like a draught of life. The Princess turned her comfortable head just so far that she could look at him with that frank untroubled admiration which was the privilege, and she used it freely, of her time of life. The girl looked at him too, inscrutable, calm. She made no movement, but the Princess nodded slowly towards an easy chair which was near to the sofa. Then, when he had dropped into the seat, she said to Daria, "Make music, child." Daria rose, but, instead of going to the piano, went without a

Music of Daria

sound into the chamber of her other aunt. After a few minutes she returned, and said shortly that Aunt Caroline was better. The young man was reminded to ask with due interest after Miss Hartup; and, as he asked, he realized that her absence was one more boon for him. With her had passed from the air a restlessness, a troublesome gaiety; without her the atmosphere of the evening was deeper and finer too. As Daria stood silent, as if in doubt, Stephen moved as if he would offer her his chair. But he did not mean to rise; he hoped that she would sit again upon the floor and lean against her aunt's sofa, and not disturb the charm.

"Won't you talk?" he asked.

"No," she answered. She did not move. She held the attention of both, as a great actress will hold a theatre, without a word or movement.

"She will discourse most excellent music," said the Princess, speaking her most excellent English with her rich foreign tone.

"Aunt Caroline asked me to play," said the girl as she opened the piano; "her head is much better."

"She eats too much," said the Princess softly; "too much meat, too few beans."

Daria began to play softly, as if to herself.

Stephen knew little of music, but in his boyhood he had heard many good musicians who were friends of his grandfather—both friend and patron of artists. He did not try to think how much of the effect of this girl's playing was due to the influence of her personality on him and how much to her art. The excite-

Stephen Calinari

ment, which had been soothed since his coming, rose higher again. "Surely it's wonderful!" he murmured to the Princess when there was a pause in the music.

The only answer was a low laugh, which did not jar on the harmonies. The girl sat quite still before the piano, with her hands dropped on her lap; but the air still seemed to vibrate with the poetry of her playing. She was well aware that the young man had risen from his place, though he was careful to make no noise. She did not look at him; she felt his approach. A little shudder passed over her.

"Whose music is that?" he asked at her elbow.

"Mine."

"Yours? Do you mean that you composed it?"

"Yes; and this too," she added, crashing in sudden discord on the keys.

"Ah!" he cried out, offended.

"Think of the other poor aunt," said the Russian aunt from her cushions.

Daria sat listening, but no sound came from Miss Hartup's chamber. "She probably thinks it a cradle song," said the girl; "lullaby of a baby up-to-date. Sit down again," she said to Stephen; "you paralyse my hands. Sit down, and I will play you something else."

"Something of yours?"

"No, something good." Her strong hands sought the keys as he went obediently to his seat. It was a setting of "The Erl-King" of Goethe—no novelty indeed for musicians—but it happened that both song

Goodbye

and rendering were new to Stephen. The clever youth was comparatively stupid on the dramatic side, as is the common lot of clever Englishmen, and he had never felt dramatic power so keenly as he felt it now. It was like the opening of a new chapel of Art to him; life seemed even richer than when he had entered the room. The quality of her voice moved him to the heart. She sang softly, perhaps for the sake of the invalid; but that only served to suggest the power which was not used. And exquisite was the art which distinguished the words of the father, of the child, of the demon of the storm; no forced theatrical differences, but delicate distinctions as befitted the place and hour. The poet's changes of rhythm had been comprehended by the musician, and the singer gave to them their finest quality.

Stephen was astonished. He envied the gift. He found himself full of the thought that he would have liked to be able to do that. It seemed a pity that he could not do everything. He longed to drain the cup of life; he had to learn, like Thor, that he was emptying the unplumbed sea.

CHAPTER XXV

GOODBYE

IT was strange to think that this girl could do something which he, Stephen Calinari, could not do, try as he might. She had a wonderful gift, and she was more wonderful than her gift. As he ran down-

Stephen Calinari

stairs he hummed, not quite correctly, some music of her making. He would see her again in an hour or less. In what mood would she then appear? He wondered if she changed her mood with her dress. If so, she changed it more often, though to the male eye she seemed fond of changes of raiment also. How every change became her. She was mistress, he supposed, of that feminine art, of which he had heard with inattentive ear, the art of dressing herself. He wondered if in London she would be held a little fantastic in dress, as in other matters. There was certainly a touch of something foreign. Where were his winged thoughts flying? He caught himself imagining her on a platform at a political meeting; a smell of oil lamps was in his nostrils; he shook his head impatiently.

When he opened the door of his room his mind leapt in an instant to new thoughts. Letters, a telegram, a newspaper in its wrapper, a note left by hand, these lay in a heap on his table. Before he had opened one of the missives he knew that he was called away. The note was from his friend at the Embassy; the telegram from a London editor. The hour had come and he could go to the front. Still standing he read his letters and glanced over the newspaper. Stirring times indeed. His eye kindled as he read, though the news was none of the latest. He read of another repulse before Plevna with terrible loss to the Russian army. If Suleiman could break northward through the Shipka Pass, surely the Russians must raise the siege and be glad if they gained mere safety beyond

Goodbye

the barrier of the Danube. He was on fire to join Suleiman's headquarters. All his preparations had been made; he had made sure of means, as of course he always made sure. Tomorrow in the morning he would set forth. If only the weak Muscovite force in the Shipka would hold the Turk till he could reach him! Tomorrow at the first dawn he would be stirring; but tonight? He looked at his watch; he had only just time to change his clothes before he returned to dine with the Princess and with Daria. A new exquisite element of emotion would be his as he talked, as he listened to Daria, knowing that it was the last hour, the eve of parting, that his wine-glass was a stirrup-cup. He stood smiling, even while his careful mind went over again his route and the necessities of travel. He almost felt when he re-entered the room, which in so short a time had grown familiar, that these ladies must feel the change which had come to him. But the atmosphere seemed the same which he had left; repose and the memories of music were in the untroubled air. When they were seated at dinner he spoke on indifferent things. The girl was rather silent; she seemed more gentle. The Princess was always inclined to silence during dinner. She took dining seriously; she did not pretend that she did not care for the qualities of foods and wines. She cared a great deal; but on one day in the week she lived entirely on beans. It was a cure which she had found for herself, and it gave her a fine latitude of eating and drinking on the other six days. So Stephen was the most talkative of that little party. And yet

Stephen Calinari

from moment to moment he delayed the announcement of his departure; he played with the thought of it between his speeches. Should he or should he not tell them when next he opened his lips? Would she care? He wondered much if this strange girl would care, and, if she cared, in what degree.

Meanwhile the dainty meal went forward soft-footed, dimly illumined. A courier in a black frock-coat and a man in Russian dress with meditative eyes and a ragged beard waited on the diners, both noiseless and both efficient. The light of shaded candles made the round table a circle glimmering with glass and silver and fine linen in an odorous gloom.

Though he had spoken of this and that, dinner was almost ended before Stephen spoke of the latest news which had reached him. Perhaps news from the scene of war seemed to him too close to that announcement of his own departure, with which he dallied and which he still delayed. Perhaps it was with a sense of drawing near to that secret, which might be charged with some measure of emotion, that he at last asked if they had heard of the last attack on Plevna. He had heard it said that no women were good judges of wine. He was wondering if these ladies chose their own good wine, or what man chose it for them, as his fingers held the delicate stem of the wineglass, and he mentioned that the Russian loss was put at twenty or thirty thousand. He heard a sound which was almost a moan, and looking quickly up in the softly shadowed light he saw that Daria's eyes were full of tears. She

Goodbye

shuddered as he looked at her with keen surprise in his eyes.

"I beg your pardon," he said quickly, and then with wonder, "Do you feel it like that?"

"I feel it so little, and that's the horror of it."

"So little?" he asked with surprise and sympathy.

"Do you know what it means, your ten thousand or your twenty thousand or your thirty thousand? You talk like a mathematician doing a sum; but these are not cold figures, these are men one hour full of life, eager to live, and then a great blare of hell-fire and the crash of guns and they are writhing creatures in torment or cold in death."

"I am sorry," said Stephen; "I did not think——"

"Sorry!" she broke in; "so am I sorry, and much good that does. I care more for the fit of my new gown than for all these lives!"

"It would do them no good if your new gown were a misfit," said the young man, smiling; but she only answered with a gesture so contemptuous, of him or of herself or of both, that it was almost like a box on the ears.

The Princess emptied her glass. "It does not do to spread yourself like that," she said in her rich rolling tones; "you can't feel for armies," and she began to roll a cigarette for herself with fingers which were slightly yellowed by the habit.

"We feel for nobody," said the girl; "it does not even spoil our dinner. When we have dined we can afford time for emotions." She got up and moved towards the window.

Stephen Calinari

Stephen looked after her with an expression of sympathy and fine intelligence. "Of course it is very dreadful," he said, anxious to please her; "and one must bear in mind that these men are the breadwinners, and that many of them represent wives and families deprived of support."

Daria did not seem to hear him. She stood staring into the depth of the night. Stephen turned to the Princess, questioning with his eyebrows; but that great lady only slowly shook her smooth head as she breathed a ring of smoke to the air.

The courier of uncertain nationality and the Russian servant cleared the table and pushed it to a corner of the spacious room. Then the Russian servitor brought a small round table and placed it by the side of the sofa, on which the Princess had now sunk with a sumptuous laxity. Bowing with an almost Oriental reverence the faithful follower set ready to his lady's hand the dainty vessels for the making of coffee in the Eastern mode and the silver box of cigarettes. Then he withdrew from her presence, and she with a cigarette fixed in the corner of her mouth made coffee as perhaps only she could make it. She inhaled the new fragrance with a frank enjoyment. When she had prepared the first cup Stephen was quick to carry it to the girl, who still stood silent, inscrutable, commercing with the vast mysterious night. He was eager to win back her kindness; vivid to him was the consciousness that this was the eve of parting; they must not part in coldness. When he was at her elbow the eyes which she turned on him were not unkind; they

Goodbye

seemed to have borrowed dreams from the great ocean of the outer night. She took the fragile cup in her artist fingers and thanked him. He was made bold to ask for more music. She said nothing, but moved to the piano. Then she seemed to stand in doubt, meditative, and Stephen asked promptly if he should light the candles which stood above the keyboard.

"No," she said; "I like to play in dusk."

The shaded candlesticks of the dinner-table had retired with the table to a far corner, and the large spaces of the room were filled by a luxurious obscurity. The girl began to play firmly, softly; the boy sat as near to her as he dared. When she had played awhile she stopped, and in the silence they heard the deep easy breathing of the Princess; the girl laughed low at the sound.

"Is she asleep?" whispered Stephen.

She made no answer, but let her hands move again over the white ivory. Presently she began to add the riches of her voice, singing softly, crooning, whispering, as it seemed. The equable heart of the young man trembled. She seemed to be recalling fragments of song, touching and leaving, filling the spaces of her voice with music of the keys; but at last she slipped into a song, from which she did not pass away so soon. "Si vous croyez," she sang. His heart beat fast. Was she singing to him?

"Si vous croyez que je vais dire
Qui j'ose aimer
Je ne saurai pas pour un empire
Vous la nommer."

Stephen Calinari

She laid a slight ironic emphasis on the "la." "'Tis a boy's song," she said as she played, speaking with no marring of the melody, and so went on to murmur—

" Nous allons chanter a la ronde,
Si vous voulez,
Que je l'adore et qu'elle est blonde
Comme les bles."

She whispered the dainty words of Alfred de Musset and let the tune die away under the fingers.

"I am going," he murmured a little hoarsely at her ear.

"Goodnight, goodnight," she sang low.

"I mean that I am going away, away from here."

She slipped into the forgotten air of "Partant pour la Syrie." "When do you go?" she murmured through the music.

"Tomorrow." He thought that this must rouse her from this dreamy fooling.

"Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow," she sang as if it were a recitative.

"I *was* so eager to go," he said, bending forward, trying to read her face in the warm dusk.

"You will be glad," she murmured, letting her left hand fall from the keys to her lap; her right still idly touched the notes; her head was drooping; he could not see her face. "You will be glad," she said again; "it is the lot of man. You will find adventure, life—life. Women are left to play most dolorous music, to sound the doleful chords and weep."

Goodbye

"Would you weep?" He was very near to her as he asked. "Would *you*?"

For answer she played in a most mournful manner, which passed to the excessive maudlin, delicate mockery of sentimental sorrows. But he had no ear for fine distinctions in music.

"That is awfully touching," he whispered.

"It is absurd," she said, pouting.

It was a need for him to put an end to the fantastic which eluded him; it was a need to bring the talk to himself. "I wish I knew if you would care at all," he said earnestly, speaking low.

Her right hand idly touched the notes.

"Shall you stay here?" he asked. "Shall I find you here?"

"Who knows?" He could not tell from her voice if she cared a jot.

"I must see you some day somewhere," he said with decision.

"We shall not hide," she said; "nor is the world so great. 'O little world and little love,'" she began to murmur in song again.

"You are unkind," he said almost angrily.

She half turned her head towards him, but still he could not read her face. Her right hand still glimmered close before him on the keys. Trembling a little he touched it with his own right hand. It neither moved nor trembled.

"Goodbye," he said under his breath. He thought her cold as ice; and yet it was by all her power that her hand was kept still. She sat alert, alarmed. She

Stephen Calinari

wondered that the light touch of his hand on hers should move this tumult of the blood. She was frightened by this force, which was almost too strong for her, some earth-spirit that swayed the senses. She got quickly to her feet, withdrawing her hand in the movement, and went towards her aunt's sofa. Stephen followed her. The Princess reclined deep in slumber.

"Don't wake her," said the girl without looking at him; "I will say your goodbyes for you." She moved noiselessly to the door as if to show him out; but when she had opened the door she passed out to the head of the stairs and stood still again. Stephen followed her. The landing was far darker than the room, and as he came to her, neither could see the other's face. But he found her hand and held it as he said again that he hated to say goodbye. She began to wonder if he were not holding her hand longer than was usual. A slight dizziness affected her, and she felt as if she were drawn towards him. Was he really drawing her towards him? She yielded herself a little that she might know if it were so. Then she took command of herself and quietly withdrew her hand. She had not said a word nor uttered a sound; but now she heard him speak low, almost hoarsely; she was not sure if he spoke her Christian name. Indeed, he was by no means clear; he had never been so incapable of eloquence. "Goodbye," she said with measured regret, and turned back towards the room. He moved quickly before her to the door, perhaps to open it for her, perhaps to bar her way; but as he hesitated she passed him quickly by, and with yet an-

In the Shipka Pass

other "Goodbye" went into the room. Even then he waited, expectant, listening; and it seemed not in vain, for the door opened again softly and she tossed something to him which struck him on the breast. As he picked it up from the floor he knew it for a rose; it had pricked his finger. The door closed again with a sharp sound; Stephen knew in a moment that the noise was made to awaken the Princess. He heard her deep voice questioning and her rolling laughter. Then he laughed too, but with a strange catching of the breath. Then with bravado he touched the rose with his lips and laughed again. His mind began to be busy with the early start on the morrow.

When the morrow came there was neither light nor sound in the apartment of the interesting ladies when Stephen, booted and spurred, came out upon the landing. He paused, listening. Then morning called him and youth and the spirit of adventurous wayfaring. He came out into the light of dawn with a rose in his coat and humming an air of victory.

CHAPTER XXVI

IN THE SHIPKA PASS

STEPHEN had hoped with all his heart that the small Russian force who were holding the Shipka Pass would delay the Turkish army till he was there to see the game; and he was not disappointed. He had a Benjamin's portion of the venial egoism of youth; and perhaps it is not surprising that to him at

Stephen Calinari

that time more important than the issue of the war, more important than the lives or deaths of men, was this chance of a new experience for him. His career was so much to him, and his training for this career, which lay before him intensely interesting, a romance more fascinating than the written stories of the world. Whether Turk beat Russian or Russian Turk was at the time a matter of comparative indifference. Indeed he could express this indifference with the air of a philosopher; he had the phrases ready; it was an attitude familiar to superior men of Oxford at that time. Without doubt both were right and both were wrong. If impertinent Philistines asked you if you were a Turk or a Russian, you might answer that you were neither and both, as you answered yes and no to a question of the freedom of the will. To be a violent partisan in this affair was to this budding statesman to be stupid, stupid as the fellow who cheered Lord Shaftesbury at St. James' Hall, stupid as the other fellow who shouted the Constantinople Chorus at the more vulgar hall of night. Stephen had kept an open mind, and with this mind yet open wide he hurried to the headquarters of Suleiman Pasha, and smiled with recognition of his normal fortune when he found that general still butting his stubborn head against the rock of Saint Nicholas, which was the strong centre of the strong position of the foe.

The foe were few but tenacious, and their entrenchments were hard to take. It was a strong position strongly fortified. It lay in the middle of the pass, in shape like a pear, the butt end obvious to the warlike

In the Shipka Pass

Ottoman, the stalk pointing northward to the line of Muscovite retreat. The centre of the position was the stout rock of Saint Nicholas, and the sides sloping backward with the gradual slope of the pear were almost as strong as the face. Perhaps its strategic weakness lay in the ability of an enterprising opponent to march round it and leave the Russians brooding in their fastness while he hurried on to the relief of Plevna. There were but a few thousand Russians in the Shipka, and it would not have been hard perhaps to neutralise the force without capturing their position. But whether for want of zeal in aiding a rival Pasha, or lack of strategy or stolid determination to crush the enemy where he lay, the Turk continued to hurl himself against that iron place, until the young student of statesmanship, beaming with joy of his good fortune, arrived hot-foot to view the game of war. When he rode into the sultry camp, long used and long abused, he breathed a sigh of relief as he thought that it was he who was there, he who was to see this history in the making, he who had the eyes to see.

His luck continued. It seemed to him as if the general had waited for his coming. On the next morning rumour was in the air, and a movement of men, and this developed into a grand attack which was within an ace of victory. Stephen was stirring with the first light of day and in search of his good Chaloner Coop; and here again was he fortunate, for he not only found his friend but found him full of information, full of zeal and full of joy that he could guide this brilliant novice immediately to a place of

Stephen Calinari

interest. Chaloner was hearty, even at his highest point of heartiness. Words were not enough for him, and to realize his feelings he kept clapping Stephen's shoulder or smiting him playfully on the chest. There had been much to see, but at each moment of repose his thoughts had leapt back to the Bosphorus and to Stephen. He had felt the weight of him on his sturdy conscience; he longed to show him what he had seen, and from this moment they would see everything together. To compare the view of one with that of the other would, Chaloner declared, be the most enchanting exercise. He had scarce time to ask after Miss Fane and her aunts; of course he was delighted that they were well, but all womankind must wait till evening, for this was to be a day of men, a momentous day of warriors. Here was no place for women, nor for thoughts of women; he felt a very Turk for the moment. He knew all about the movement of the day; indeed he was brimming over with it; and as he guided the newcomer he explained to him the attack which had already begun. The Turks had seized high ground both to right and left of the pear-shaped stronghold of the Russians; and today they were to push forward on both sides till they gained the rear of the position, which would then have to be abandoned by the small force who had held it with so admirable stolidity. It was a point of vantage on the left which Chaloner had chosen for his view and to which he guided Stephen. Though the day was young the air on the lower ground was sultry; and Stephen, toiling by his friend's side up a track, which was for the most part

In the Shipka Pass

but the rocky bed of a dry stream, regretted for the moment that he had not given himself more to the athletic exercises of his fellows. Still he persevered, and, slight of form and fine of skin, he showed the effects of the steamy heat far less than his more stalwart companion. Chaloner talked and sweated all the way, his flat kindly face glistening with moisture, his strong legs stumping up the rugged track. So for some two hours they clambered up until at last they came out on to a small level space, a natural terrace high above the thronging trees which stretched far away before their feet. On this small plateau it was somewhat cooler, but yet a brooding stillness held the air as if before the coming of a storm. A small group was there already, a Turkish general, who acknowledged Chaloner Coop's salute with polite indifference, and a few young officers with fieldglasses and cigarettes. Strangely apathetic they looked in the eyes of the young men of the West, these Eastern youths of mixed race, sons and grandsons of Circassian or Armenian women, of the dominant class of Turks and yet so little Turkish but in name. The interest which the young correspondents took in the movement now in progress seemed far greater than all the interest of all the officers. They smoked in calm and brooded like the day. Perhaps this air of indifference was in part assumed, and without doubt a part was due to the disappointing fact that it was impossible to see what was going on below. Russian infantry had held the wood on the right of their intrenchments, the wood which stretched away below the high point of view

Stephen Calinari

to which our eager spectators had climbed; but the Turkish left had forced them back, still obstinately fighting, and outflanking them more and more were now pressing them inward to their stronghold. So the fight was rolling away from the spectators' feet, and under the screen of the dense far-reaching wood was wholly lost to sight. Only above the wide expanse of leafy green rose here and there a puff of smoke and broke noiseless like the soap bubble of a child.

Stephen, so soon as he had recovered breath, began to blame his friend. Had they climbed for two hours and on such a track to see nothing? Chaloner was disappointed too; he had expected to be nearer to the fun. But he had gained a habit of making the best of things, and he now began to point out the lie of the land with interest which grew with his speech, and Stephen caught the zeal as he listened. After all it was good to be there. Through his glasses he could see clearly the rock of Saint Nicholas, centre and key of the Russian position; and if they could not see the fighting in the wood they could follow its course by the smoke and the sound, the artillery that crashed into the trees and the advance of smoke bubbles above the advance of unseen rifles. It was hard not to believe it a game, a parody of war, such as he had watched on the Barham Downs or on the bloodless fields of Aldershot. But he told himself that this was war, real war; that it was he who was there on its very edge, he who was gathering this new experience instead of gnawing his pencil in a college lecture room, while a young don with hopeless eyes, who had made

In the Shipka Pass

the weary round before, made tentative remarks about Plato. He stood erect and viewed the scene like its master. As he used his glasses there came to him a thought of Daria Fane; it contributed to the pleasure of the moment. He smiled as he thought that she had seemed, or tried to seem, a little doubtful of his merits and his claims. What would she think of him if she saw him cool and confident under fire? That suggested the further question if he were under fire or not. What did that familiar newspaper phrase imply? He knew nothing of explosives nor of the range of modern weapons. If that big rock in the distance turned a gun on the general near him he wondered what would happen. It was interesting, but he could not take it as heroic. The air was much pleasanter up here above the wood, and he smiled as he breathed it, full of life and close to great events.

When the outlying Russian infantry had been rolled backward and inward to the shelter of their intrenchments, the guns had begun to thunder into the trees which concealed the advancing Turks. The advance was quicker and quicker, and now Stephen could see, even before the more experienced Chaloner gripped his arm and poured the news into his ear, that the Turks had gained ground so far and fast that they were almost beyond the Russian stronghold, almost at the stalk of the pear. If on the right the Turks had been equally successful the Russians must evacuate the place; it became a question of escape, of retreat in haste to the northern side of the Balkans.

"By Jingo, they are going," cried Chaloner, star-

Stephen Calinari

ing through his glasses. The thunder of the guns had ceased; and now Stephen staring too could see grey soldiers moving in the works. Yes, surely they were going out of the intrenchments, surely he was seeing the abandonment of this stronghold already famous. There was a breathless pause, and then quite plainly they could see a small grey column, like a dark caterpillar, creeping away, retreating from the works up the pass, northward to Gabrova, to the Danube, to Russia. If there were still room for doubt in the minds of the English spectators, the conduct of the Turkish officers was enough to confirm their view. There was movement in the group heretofore so lethargic, interchange of short speeches, new handling of glasses. The general spoke with decision, looking around him as if in search of some means of signalling; but it became clear that there were none. It became clear too that there was need of signalling, for the Turks in the wood made no movement to occupy the abandoned lines. They took no notice of the silence of the Russian artillery; they still pressed on through the trees to gain the rear of the intrenchments which they might have entered with no further delay.

Stephen was impatient of stupidity. It exasperated him to see the officers beside him unable to tell the men of their victory, and to imagine the men stumbling forward in ignorance of their own success. These stupid fighting men had won the place and did not know it. Though five minutes before he would have calmly proclaimed his neutrality, this moment made him a partisan.

The Dead Man

"Won't they tell them? Can't they tell them?" he asked feverishly of Chaloner, who was glaring through his glasses. The youngest Turk on the plateau had ascended the highest place and was aimlessly firing his revolver in the air. A spectacle of such impotence exasperated the practical youth. "Can't *we* do something? Can't *we*?" he asked eagerly.

Chaloner closed his glasses with a snap, looked for a minute carefully at the general, and then touched Stephen on the arm. As he touched him he sauntered carelessly to the far end of the plateau as if to gain a different point of view, and having gained it stepped noiselessly forward and downward, and hurried into the shelter of the trees. Stephen was hard on his heels, and the two friends hastened forward without a word.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE DEAD MAN

THE movement which Stephen and Chaloner had seen from afar like a stirring of ants was to a near view the very crisis of tragedy. The two Russian generals, who stood together on the highest point of the works, with uniforms begrimed with dust and faces blistered by the sun, looked down upon their men and thought that they saw the beginning of the end. Stolid and brave they had clung to their rocky hold, enduring the fierce attack of foes, and from the earliest to the last ray of light the fiercer scorching of the tyrannic sun. And now it seemed that they could

Stephen Calinari

do no more. For days past there had been no time for cooking, and every drop of water had to be fetched at risk of death from outside the intrenchments. All this the men had stubbornly endured, all this and the unceasing advance of a victorious enemy, till on both sides, from valleys and hills, sounded the cry to Allah and the sharp ring of the rifles. Now on this morning it seemed even to those gallant generals that the time of retreat had come. The attack on right and left had been successful; their men on both sides had been forced from the woods within their narrow lines; it seemed as if only a prompt retreat could prevent the meeting of the two Turkish divisions in their rear and the capture of their own small force where they stood. And so the movement had begun, the defence had ceased, and the blackened, blistered soldiers, parched with thirst, were sullenly abandoning the post which they had held so well against an army. Suddenly one of the generals laid his hand upon the arm of the other. His tongue could not frame words in his dry mouth; he could only babble, but he pointed, pointed away back up the pass, to the road of their retreat. The other general looked, and there upon the reddish road was something black. It might have been a delusion born of hope, like a mirage in the desert; but they looked longing and speechless, and lo, it was the head of a Russian column, of troops advancing to their relief. The two men bared their heads, and the first words which they could utter were a thanksgiving to God. And the murmur beneath them swelled into a roar; the men saw also, and their mouths

The Dead Man

were moistened and they shouted for joy of their deliverance.

Meanwhile the two young Englishmen, knowing nothing of this new turn of Fortune's wheel, hurried down from the plateau, downward through trees which grew closer as they came to lower ground. Chaloner in advance plunged through the thick undergrowth like a young steer. Stephen followed eagerly, delighted and excited by the change, by hope of adventure; but as he followed further and further through what seemed a dense and tangled and unending wood his eagerness began to ooze away. Up on the plateau there was at least a movement of the air, but here, though there was green shade from the straight shafts of sun, there seemed no air at all. There they could see something, but here nothing. This clumsy crashing and stumbling was not to his taste; he began to doubt more and more if it would lead him anywhere; he was each moment more annoyed by the sight of Chaloner's back heaving on before him like a fishing-boat on a bumpy sea. It seemed likely to him that Chaloner had not the least idea of his goal; and it was annoying that he should never look back, that he should take it for granted that his friend was following with the docility of a dog. He began to go slower, to think of taking a line of his own, to be careless at least whether his headlong guide were in sight or not. They had gone for some time in this manner, without sight or hearing, when a single gun broke out again from the stronghold of the Russians. This brought Stephen to a stand. He stopped, panting,

Stephen Calinari

half-stifled in the hot breathless wood. Then other cannon roared, and Stephen guessed with keen vexation that the movement of abandonment had ceased. The Russians had reoccupied their position; and all this stupid plunging of the good Coop had been for nothing. He stood wiping his forehead and considering what he should do now. He said to himself pettishly that it was time that he took again the management of himself. He perceived also that he had no choice in the matter, for his guide had made no pause at the renewed sound of guns, and there was now no sign of him in all that wilderness of green. At this he felt an overwhelming sense of loneliness. He was tired but restless, hot of head but cold of foot. He was shut in by motionless trees. Only not far before him he could hear the crashing of boughs tormented by an iron hail and a strange glare in one place which might mean that the wood was on fire there.

Stephen was too restless to stand still. He could not determine to advance or to retreat; and so after hanging uncertain for a while he began to move forward towards the din of war, but from pure pettishness not in the track of the provoking Chaloner. Thus moving aimlessly he pushed his way by chance to a small clearing in the wood; and there for the first time he looked on a dead man. Stephen stood staring dully at this strange thing. A fanciful observer might have thought that the dead had a weird power of withdrawing life from this youth so vivid and so keen. He stood with his mouth open, dull and stupid, and the fresh colour had faded from his cheeks. Death had

The Dead Man

been a word to him; its equivalent had been useful to him at one time in his boyish attempts at spinning Latin verses; it had sounded artificial to him in pulpit phrases which announced the mortality of man. Of course man was mortal, but that was very different to this lifeless thing at his feet. He wondered how he knew that this was dead. Perhaps the head lay at an angle a little unnatural. He wondered stupidly; he felt pitiful, a little sick. He bent a little forward that he might see the face; the eyes were terrible to him. He had read of closing the eyes of the dead; he wished to do what was right; but a dizziness, a sickness overcame him. He could not touch the thing. He was feverish in that hot pricking heat. His head was hotter and his eyes ached. Suddenly he broke away with a hoarse cry and hurried blindly forward.

For a short time Stephen stumbled on through the clinging undergrowth. Then he stopped and stood uncertain. As he stood debating if he should return or no, suddenly he heard a rending crash almost straight above his head, and a great branch torn by a flying shell came swinging down and fell before him with a crushing of leaves and twigs. Stephen could almost touch the nearest leaves with his foot. A few yards nearer and the great bough had fallen on his head; a few yards nearer and he would have been like that still uncanny thing which lay behind him in the wood, and which an hour ago had been full of life, treading the forest, a sturdy square-shouldered Turkish private with his face the colour of a brick and a good-humoured grin on his mouth. And a chance shot now might

Stephen Calinari

transform Stephen also into such as this, as this which he had not borne to look on, as this from which he had fled. He looked up and around him with a sickening fear. He seemed to see the light on the grass of the old college quadrangle, the light of wax candles in a London ballroom, the Bosphorus gleaming peaceful under brilliant stars—scenes of safety wherein he had moved confident and gay. And now—in the next moment he might lie struck by the bullet of an unseen foe or crushed hideously beneath a torn branch, dead like a trapped beast under a bough. Where would be the brilliant life which he had foreseen, the career which he had meant to run? Killed in a tangle by an unseen man and left to rot! It was more than he could bear. A chill like the chill of the death which he foresaw, possessed him. He shuddered where he stood and a cold sweat broke out upon his brow. And then fear came to battle with fear. He was afraid that he was a coward; and at that thought his heart seemed to stand still in the intense stillness of the wood.

A pause had come in the firing, and the boy listened like a prisoner awaiting sentence of death. If he were a coward? Then to him, alive or dead, all life worthy to be called life was over. In no crisis of that career, which had been the daily food of his imagination, could he be sure of himself if he were a coward. All his well-laid schemes might fail at any moment for want of that mere courage of the private soldier, of the man in the street. This new fear of fear clutched his heart; he could not bear the doubt of himself a moment longer; there and then he must prove to him-

The Dead Man

self that he was not a coward. The first movement made him feel better. Steadily he went back, looking for that little clearing whence he had fled in terror. He went back and stood by the dead. Then he kneeled upon the parched earth; in spite of himself his lips were bleating as if in incoherent prayer; perhaps the attitude set the words going lamely. He shuddered like a man in fever, but still he looked steadily on the corpse. Then he put his hand to it and laid the poor limbs straighter; and he closed the eyes which had frightened him, cold himself as death in that place of stinging heat. When he rose to his feet he was free of his second, his more awful fear. He rubbed his hands together and stopped the quivering of his limbs; and he stood quiet, forcing himself to think of shot and shell which at any moment might rend him as they rent the vivid canopy of green above his head.

And so to Stephen there came a quick elation, a joy in the proof that he was more strong than fear. And yet he started nervously and laughed aloud at his own nervousness, when on his ear there struck the tramp and hoarse voices of men. Rifles rang nearer and nearer. Nervous, alert, his senses on edge, he peered through the growth, and soon he could see men trudging in the underwood towards him, dim forms yet beyond the thronging trunks, stopping one by one and firing backward. They were Turks and in retreat. With them came Chaloner, and from them he rushed upon his friend with a cry, wheeling him round, asking questions and giving news, breathless and flushed with excitement. Stephen gathered, as they hurried

Stephen Calinari

on, that they had been attacked in the wood by a strong force of the reinforcing Russians, while the yet stronger body had marched up the road and straight into the works all but abandoned by their stubborn countrymen. Stephen listened and understood; and yet the better part of his intelligence was busy with other thoughts. To Chaloner's recurring question how he had lost him in the wood he gave no answer.

CHAPTER XXVIII

IN FIGHT AND FEVER

STEPHEN, for all his ignorance of military affairs, was right in thinking that he had seen the turning-point of the war in that hour when the Turks came bustling back through the wood, an hour so momentous to them and to him. Chaloner continued to produce every morning a new scheme or a new rumour and foresaw a dozen chances of fresh victories for the glory of the Ottoman and for his own reporting; but Stephen, with a clearer vision and by happy chance, was right in thinking that the turn had come. The small force of Russians, who had clung to their parched rocks, panting and stubborn in the blinding heat, were trebled by the newcomers; and thus reinforced and reanimated they could offer a resistance more than trebly strong to the attacks of Suleiman. If Suleiman could not destroy them nor leave them in his rear as he pierced the barrier of the Balkans, then Plevna must fall and all the land between the Danube and the

In Fight and Fever

mountains lie at the mercy of the Russians. Stephen thought that it did not need a military expert to decide that the hardest half of the Czar's task would be then accomplished.

Indeed it soon appeared that the Russians in the Shipka were no longer content to defend themselves. One evening they issued forth in force and making vigorous demonstrations to their left and front, they made their real attack with their right; and pressing forward all night long they forced the enemy back, capturing wooded height and hollow till they gained even that high plateau from which young Calinari had had his first sight of war. But the Pasha calmly strengthened his left, and with the morning came again the fierce onslaught of the Turks, who delight in war; and the Russians yet again were driven back with slaughter, back through the woods which they had won, till they were cooped once more in their long-held stronghold in the middle of the pass.

The Russians had lost heavily both in advance and retreat; but the Turks, who had driven them back to their lines, brought in no prisoners. Neither prisoners nor wounded comrades were to be seen in the camp. This seemed strange to the novice; but Chaloner, more versed in war, explained to him that all the mules, and all other means of transport, if any other means there were, were needed to bring up supplies of food and ammunition. The fighting soldier must be served with rice and cartridges before a thought could be given to the disabled man. Then the woods on which he looked became a horror to Stephen, who was

Stephen Calinari

feverish, restless, less well than he had ever been before. That fair green coverture concealed innumerable corpses like that one which he had seen, or wounded men writhing in torment. Glib phrases about "the horrors of war" had a new meaning for him. He could hardly bear to look out upon the scene. He was not well. In September came the first rains, and the dry blistering heat was transformed to a steaming vapour which was more oppressive. The sun was hot by day, but the nights were cold. The Turkish camp was foul and feverish. Sickness grew common. Even the stalwart Chaloner fell ill, and finding that he could not work, went off one morning at the peep of dawn. He had been persuaded at last that the war tended southward, and he told Stephen privately that he should be ready to describe the entrance of the victors into Stamboul. Meanwhile he must nurse himself back to his best for that historic hour.

Stephen after his friend's departure fell into a state which for him was strangely lethargic. He worked without spirit; he observed with only a faint interest. He knew that he was not well, but he was determined not to be ill. He felt a little contempt for Chaloner because he had yielded so easily to fever, and he felt great confidence in his own constitution. Indeed he was like a watchspring. He had a valuable elasticity which served him better than the thews and sinews of the athletic Coop. And yet he was more affected by the feverish atmosphere than he knew; and it was with pulses quickened by fever and head dis-

In Fight and Fever

ordered by quinine that he crept out one night at the sound of furious guns. All was dark, and from the unseen rock of Saint Nicholas flashes of fire cut the heavy darkness as if the flaming sword of an archangel rent the black curtain of the night. Stephen at moments felt himself moving in a feverish dream, as he groped his way in the rear of the unseen attack on that scarred and blistered rock which flashed with fire. But it was no imaginary or vain advance; and the first faint light of dawn found that disputed rock, that key to the position, in Turkish hands. The growing light showed the Turks their success; they were in it and on it; they held the key. But the light showed them too that no troops were coming in support; and the Russians, realizing also the danger and the loss, came crowding back, more and more men, till the small force that had won the place were driven out again. Stephen met them running home like boys from school and laughing as they ran. He scorned their ignorance and stupidity, but scorned far more the dullness of leaders who could not even take the victory which their fighting men put into their hands.

After this poor effort a double portion of lethargy fell upon the sodden filthy camp. Stephen forced himself to work and spurred his lagging interest; but day followed day without event until he forgot to count them. The rains and their steaming heat gave place to greater cold, and winter was on them before they knew. Stephen stood shivering one day not knowing if he were too hot or too cold, when he

Stephen Calinari

jacket and lowered himself to a heap of rugs near the camp-bed which he had given up to his patient.

"Try what?" asked Stephen feebly.

"Your life. You won't thank me, if for the future it's all aches and pains."

"But it won't be," said Stephen, smiling and stretching his weak legs in the bed.

"Think that as hard as you can," said the older man. "That'll help you back to health. Life without health is no good. I have kept you from dust. If I can't keep you from pain, I can give you this." He tossed a little bottle on to the bed.

"What is it?" asked Stephen, as his nervous fingers closed upon it.

"Painless death," said the other.

The youth in his weakness felt a slight shudder, and hoped that his host could not see it.

"It all depends how much fun you can get out of life," said Moro Bey. "If it's more than half pain, then better crumble at once."

"Ain't I robbing you?" asked Stephen, laughing a little unsteadily and holding up the tiny bottle, blue in his white fingers.

"I've the ditto in my pocket," said the other; and laughed as he added, "You don't suppose I'd give away anything I wanted."

"You have taken the trouble to nurse me back to health."

"You have me there," said Moro Bey. "Man is an inconsistent beast; but it was no great trouble. I cured you mainly with another bottle, an ancient

In the Tent of Moro Bey

Arab remedy of herbs. Don't be frightened! I don't mix the bottles."

"I was not frightened."

"I think you have pluck of a sort."

"I hope so. I was none too sure—how long ago? I think it was hot before you came, and now it's cold."

"Cold enough for Mr. Turk," said Moro Bey.

"What has happened?" asked Stephen with a sudden curiosity about affairs. "Has anything happened?"

"We are whipped."

"You don't seem to care much," said Stephen, turning his head feebly on the pillow that he might see the face which interested him so much.

"It doesn't affect *me* much," said the Colonel.

"But tell me—is it all over?" asked Stephen, with a quick turn of interest to public matters.

"All over but the loot; and of that my lambs may get a share as soon as their conquerors." And he began to whistle through his teeth.

"But what has happened?" asked Stephen with impatience.

"The gallant Osman has surrendered Plevna; the gallant Gourko has dragged his guns over the tops of the Balkan Mountains and toboganned down to the plain on a tea-tray; and our own gallant Suleiman is in full retreat."

Stephen gave a cry, which came weakly from his lips, and raised himself on his narrow bed; but he was obliged to close his eyes for dizziness. "Can't

Stephen Calinari

I go somewhere and see something?" he asked eagerly.

"You'll go to grass if you don't look out," said the other with a grin.

"What are you going to do? Can't I go with you?"

Moro Bey laughed harshly as he looked at the eager youth. "You would not care about my next job," he said.

"What is it? What are you going to do?"

"I am going to slip away from my men."

"Desert your men?"

"Yes. They won't miss me much. If they keep ahead of the Cossacks they will have lots of fun between this and Stamboul. They will have first go at the plunder."

"At the plunder of their own people?"

"As to their own people," said the Colonel thoughtfully, "my men are a mixed lot, but there's very little Europe in them; and as to the plundered chaps, what can it matter to them if they are robbed and murdered by Kurds or Cossacks?"

"And you won't stay with them? You won't make an effort to control them?"

Moro Bey snapped his strong fingers. "I have fish of my own to fry," he said. "I am afraid I shock you," he added; "but what is there but appetites to satisfy and then an end. Grasp that, and the life which I give you will be worth living. I never knew a man who did not know below his frills and pretences that he was dirt and to dirt must crumble."

In the Tent of Moro Bey

"I suppose you haven't read books about all that?" said Stephen, with a weak superior air.

"I don't read books," said the Colonel. "They muddle the eye. But I've seen men, and what I tell you of men is true. Only few of them act on their certainty; unreasonable scruples remain, and they don't take half of what they might. Get strong, my boy, and take all you can." He made a large gesture.

"And have you no scruple?" asked the youth, looking half with admiration, half with distaste upon the man.

"Well," said Moro Bey, yawning widely, "I may have a scruple, a very little one, somewhere, but upon my life I can't put my finger on it. Perhaps I shan't see you again. If I don't, goodbye." He came and stood over Stephen, who had sunk back upon his pillow, and in his weakness looked like a tired child.

Stephen's interest in this man was strong. He did not like the idea of losing sight of him. "Are you going at once?" he asked.

"I desert tonight."

"Alone?"

"No," said Moro Bey. "I take three men, enough for my purpose."

"What purpose?" asked Stephen, but Moro Bey laughed his ugly laugh.

"By the bye," he said, "you are all right. Your interviewing friend, Coop, came back today in search of you. He wept when I told him you were alive. He is to come for you tonight ten minutes after my shameful desertion of my duty."

Stephen Calinari

He seemed to have no more to say, and yet he stood there a little, looking at the boy. When he had gone, swinging out of the tent with his largest cavalry air, Stephen lay wondering if it were a delusion born of his own weakness that he had seen a real interest, almost tenderness, in those strange eyes. He wondered too how much time and trouble this man of the magnificent selfishness had given to him. He wondered if he should see him again.

CHAPTER XXX

BACK TO THE BOSPHORUS

“YOU ought not to have left them,” said Stephen to Chaloner, as the two friends rode side by side in the evening of a cold inclement day. Stephen had insisted on moving southward as soon as his friend had found him in the Balkans. He was restless, eager to leave his sickness behind him, and eager to behold again the clear swift current of the Bosphorus. And the mere movement had done him good at once. He looked lean and perhaps weak as he sat on his horse at the end of the day; but his natural elasticity had had full play; he had leapt towards health; and if any fever yet lingered in him, it showed itself only in a certain impatience and perhaps in some crossness to his faithful friend. He spoke crossly now when he blamed him, not for the first time, for having left the ladies on the Bosphorus without sufficient protection.

Back to the Bosphorus

"That's a bit rough," said Chaloner amiably; "they kept saying that I ought not to have left you." He shook off his stirrups and stretched his legs as he added, "Miss Daria was immensely funny. She said that she was armed at all points, armed with aunts. She said that, if the British fleet came booming up the Bosphorus, she should send her English aunt to the Admiral; but if the Russian army descended to the shore, she should send her Russian aunt to the Grand Duke. She sent me to fetch you. She said that she knew that you were ill." These two last statements he made with greater emphasis and with a pause between them; and as he spoke he tried to read the face of his friend who gave no sign of attention. "I wanted them to go away," said Chaloner after a pause; "I did my best to get them on ship-board."

"How can we get on?" asked Stephen, and he pointed to the track which stretched before them over a wide darkling plain. All day they had overtaken parties of peasants. They had been delayed by men, women and children, dogs, horses and cows, moving away before the tide of coming war, drifting to the ancient city and the shadow of the Sultan; and as evening drew down, the crowd increased; from all sides people came thronging to the crowded road. "It is like a nightmare," said Stephen; "it will bring back my fever. Can't we get out of this? Can't we get on?"

"We must try to find some place where we can pass the night."

Stephen Calinari

"No; I won't stop. We can get on better at night."

"But the horses?"

"Can't we find new ones?"

Chaloner turned in his saddle and called to the Greek servant who followed them with the saddlebags. After a short discussion they pushed on and overtook a family, who filled the road before them and who were driving loose horses on the way. An intermittent discussion followed, as they all pushed on together; and at last Stephen, Chaloner and their servant handed over their tired horses and took in exchange three animals, which, though distinctly inferior, were more fit for travel as they had come but a short way and had carried no burden. The Turkish peasant, who ruled the family, accepted the bargain and the new beasts with the same calm which he had shown in the abandonment of his house; and after an exchange of courtesies the more eager Western youths rode briskly forward on their new animals. Far into the night they rode and saw far off across the level plain flames burn to heaven like tall torches in the windless dusk, where wild horsemen, friend or foe, Cossack or Circassian, fired village or homestead and rode on. Here and there they passed dim forms of fugitives, harmless victims plodding in the gloom or huddled by the wayside; and once they rode so near a burning town that in the fatal silence they could hear far away the crash of falling houses and the cries of men and beasts. A sob rose in the throat of Stephen who was still weak from illness. Stars

Back to the Bosphorus

shone in the cold heaven, indifferent to the infamies of man.

The young men rode in silence, wrapped close in cloaks, thinking many thoughts. Dreams of fever seemed to return to Stephen; sometimes he dozed in the saddle and woke and wondered if he were awake.

Once Chaloner returning to familiar thoughts said, "Of course you know that all this, pursuers and pursued, will flow straight to the city. Nobody will go near the Bosphorus unless somebody goes on purpose."

"And if somebody went on purpose?" asked Stephen, as if waking at his voice.

"What do you mean?" asked Chaloner.

"Nothing. Let us get on. Let us get on!" He stared into the darkness and his imagination went before him, making visions in the night. The one desire to get on possessed him more and more.

It was evening of a day, on which striking leftward from the stream of fugitives they had travelled on unencumbered ways, when the two friends saw again the familiar house, which dozed above the gleaming Bosphorus. The peaceful hour, the serene air, the silent dwelling seemed to mock the excitement and the nervous fears of Stephen. With a sigh of relief he handed his rein to their mounted servant, who would see the horses housed and groomed and fed. The man took Chaloner's horse also and rode away; and the two friends paused a moment looking at the lights upon the water and more sparse upon the Asian shore. But it was only for a moment.

Stephen Calinari

Some impulse urged Stephen to the house, and in advance of Chaloner he entered the open door and ran up the common staircase. The light was dim, and with eyes dazzled by the outer light he could not see what it was that lay at the top of the stairs and over which he stumbled in his haste. Stooping down he peered with narrowed eyes and touched it and knew that it was a corpse. In the next moment he knew it for the body of the ladies' Russian servant. As he straightened himself, white, gaunt and fierce, a cry cut the silence, a cry of fear and fury, a cry of a woman, and immediately the ring of a pistol-shot. Stephen leapt into the room and saw Moro Bey with his arm round Daria as if carrying her towards the door. Light smoke of a pistol seemed about his head which was dark against the big window. Stephen leapt at him like a wild cat, and light though he was he bore him back, while the girl wrenched herself from the encircling arm. She stood straight, but shaking from head to foot, the pistol hanging from her hand. Meanwhile Stephen had drawn his revolver and stood panting, staring at the man, who had fallen back on the low couch.

"She shot me," he said with a ghastly laugh, pointing to his left arm which hung useless—"the tigress."

Stephen said nothing, but he covered him with his revolver. Crowding on his mind came this man's theories of life, crowding and clamouring that he was not fit to live. He would kill him as he had killed the faithful man on the landing outside.

"You will be sorry," said Moro Bey with cool un-

A Letter from the Dead

shaken voice. "You'll be sorry if you kill me. I never meant to tell you, and it's damned absurd; but I'm your father."

Stephen had come to the end of his strength; the floor seemed to move beneath his feet, and he fell like a log on the floor.

CHAPTER XXXI

A LETTER FROM THE DEAD

STEPHEN awoke in the room which had been his during his former sojourn on the Bosphorus; and his eyes opened on the broad face of Chaloner, who had crept to the side of the bed at the first movement of his friend. Chaloner was leaning forward with an anxious look on his kindly face; and Stephen, lying weak and weary there, could only wonder vaguely why the good countenance was flushed and blotchy in the morning light, and the anxious inquiring eyes bloodshot. Emotion and a broken night added no beauty to the faithful Coop. Then gradually the stricken youth began to remember where he was, and then what he had seen and heard. It was there, in a room above his head, that he had seen and heard. He shut his eyes for dizziness as he spoke feebly, with broken words: "Where is he? I must see him—I must see him."

Chaloner's senses were not at their quickest. He had leaned closer, listening, but yet he did not hear the

Stephen Calinari

question right. He thought that he was asking about the girl. "She has gone," he said; "she is well; she is wonderfully brave and strong; they have gone to Pera on their way to Athens."

"*He, he,*" cried Stephen fretfully; "I must see *him*. Were you close to me? Did you hear him? Do you know?"

"I was close to you," said Chaloner: "I know."

Stephen groaned. "Oh, surely you know that you can trust me," said the other young man hoarsely; "not a word shall pass my lips. You don't think because I'm a newspaper man that I would make capital out of you. It's a tremendous story; but I am not like that; I can refrain."

Stephen put up a feeble hand and took hold of his friend's. "Tell me," he said, "what happened? Everything. I can't rest till I know." He pushed himself up with an effort, and sat shaking till Chaloner shoved in another large pillow behind him, and then he sank back again with a sigh. But he never turned his eyes from the face of his friend who told the tale.

"When you fell," said Chaloner, "he got up, with his wounded arm hanging helpless; and he came over to you and knelt down by you. I didn't know what to do."

"What did *he* do?" interrupted Stephen sharply, fretfully.

"He felt for your heart; and I suppose he felt its beating, for he got up and made a sign to me to take care of you; and then he walked straight out of the

A Letter from the Dead

room. He never looked at her at all. She never moved nor spoke till he had gone, and then she came and knelt by you too. Then I heard the Princess bustling up the stairs, quite unlike her usual way of moving; and then she stopped on the landing by the body of the poor fellow there, and I could hear her talking fast in Russian, praying or something. Miss Hartup had gone away days ago in a panic to Thessalonica to be close to the Embassy; but Miss Daria and the Princess had stayed, and——”

“But they have gone now?” asked Stephen quickly.

“Yes. They have taken the body of that poor fellow,” said Chaloner, nodding towards the staircase; “and they will bury it at Scutari and then go straight to Athens.”

Stephen felt relief. His father filled his mind. The departure of the women seemed to simplify the situation. He could whistle them down the wind for a time. He felt that he had but strength enough to care for one thing: to consider only what his father would do and what he should do about his father. The questions choked him, and he was speechless.

“She did not leave any message,” continued Chaloner, as Stephen said nothing; “but when you showed the first sign of life, she stooped and kissed your forehead.” There was awe in his voice as he told this to his friend; it seemed to him a solemn and beautiful action and to speak of it made his eyes wet; but the friend seemed scarcely to hear, though he remembered it later when next he looked at his

Stephen Calinari

face in a glass. "And then the Princess came in," continued Chaloner, "all ruffled and wringing her hands, not a bit like herself; and then Miss Daria got up, quite calm and cool, and 'You will take care of him,' she said to me; half a question and half an order it seemed to me; and I said 'Yes.'"

Stephen lay quiet for a few minutes; but the shining of his eyes and the restlessness of the fingers which picked the coarse rug, which had been spread over him, showed that he was not content. "Was he carrying her off?" he asked presently; "was he carrying her off when she shot him?"

"Yes," said Chaloner, who with the habit of the reporter had mastered the details of the case; "his men had a boat just below the house. He was taking her to his place on the other side and thence, the men thought, to Bagdad. But don't bother about that, dear old chap. It's all right, it's——"

But Stephen interrupted him angrily: "I must see him."

"Yes, yes," said Chaloner, soothing him. "They took him in the boat, and you will find him in his own house on the other side. There's no hurry; he can't move yet."

But Stephen threw back the clothes with an impatient hand and stood upon the floor. For a moment he staggered, but he mastered himself and "Help me," he said sharply.

Chaloner expostulated but in vain; he yielded to the insistence of his friend; he feared that worse

A Letter from the Dead

would come of it if he refused to help him. With his help Stephen dressed himself and leaning on his arm he went downstairs and out into the wintry sunlight. He took some biscuits with him but he refused the brandy which Chaloner offered from his flask. Once out upon the broad and moving water and in the full stream of air, which descended with its descending stream, he felt stronger, more nearly equal to his fate. When they had reached the further shore he grasped his friend's arm again and so directed him to that narrow alley, whither he had gone before. Down this alley, which was now a tunnel of cold sunless air, they went till they came to the door in the wall. They did not meet a man in the passage nor hear a sound at the door; and for a time it seemed that nobody would open to their summons. Then suddenly and without noise the door opened and without apology the tall Albanian servant of the Colonel filled the space. He looked at the two young men gravely as if to assure himself who they were and then with a bow and movement of his arm he invited them to follow him. They followed him across the neglected garden and into the silent house; and there on the table of his own familiar room lay the dead body of Moro Bey. With a lower bow the servant took from the table, where it lay beside the corpse, a letter and handed it to Stephen, who was standing white and silent; but he had withdrawn himself from the arm of his friend and stood erect looking on the thing. Chaloner, pale also, watched his friend as with firm

Stephen Calinari

fingers he opened the short note and read. It was short.

"MY DEAR BOY,—It is a rum thing for me to do; but after yesterday our meeting would be awkward; and so I shirk it. The truth is that you touched something beyond the dirt which I shall be in an hour or less. It is all I can do for you, my son, to get out of your sunshine. *Vive vaeque!*

"YOUR FATHER."

The note was written with difficulty, as was natural, but was clearly legible.

Still holding it in his hand Stephen sank down and laid his forehead against the hard edge of the table. What was the meaning of life and death? Pleasures dying at a touch, useless agonies, the myriad fruitless lives of painful men. If there were nothing beyond? And this cynical evil man had died for him. How could that be? Could dust do so? An overpowering emotion flooded him. Then sobs shook him from head to foot; and Chaloner, fearful for his friend, came softly and laid a hand upon his shoulder. But Stephen did not feel the hand. A strange conviction possessed him wholly that this dead thing, to which he might stretch forth his hand, was not his father. "Non omnis moriar," he stammered with dry tongue.

In Pera

CHAPTER XXXII

IN PERA

WITH mid-winter, grim climax of the year, the disasters of the Turk had swollen to a flood. After the capture of Plevna the Russian forces poured southward, irresistible; and through the rampart of the Balkan Mountains broke the twin dogs of war—from one pass Gourko, from another Skobeleff. For the army of Suleiman Pasha in full retreat to Constantinople a day's respite was gained by the great feat of arms of Baker Pasha and his small force of Turks, who, coming again and again into action, made the foe believe that they were stopped by an army. But not the strategy of a single general nor the persistent valour of the men, who had faith in him, could long delay the end. In the palace of the Sultan were divided counsels but one growing terror. From without came news of the advancing foe; within were threats of revolt, of assassination. Uncertain, unnerved, the Head of the Faithful sat listening in a sounding gallery of fears. Infirm of purpose, now would he fly to Asia; now would remain suppliant of the Conqueror. This counsellor made way for that; minister succeeded minister; there was a breathless activity but nothing done.

Meanwhile from dawn to dusk of each momentous day a formless army of men women and children, hungry, frost-bitten and footsore, poured in their

Stephen Calinari

flight into the ancient crowded city, choked the narrow streets and filled the spacious mosques with sick and wounded. It seemed as if at last the end were come, the end so long foreseen; as if that ancient golden squalid city, which for so long had, like a tarnished jewelled clasp, linked East and West, must now be Western wholly and busy harbour of a new Slavonian enterprise. Nothing, it seemed, could now prevent the coming of the legions of the north into the place of their dreams. But even then the advance was stayed. On the last day of January an armistice was arranged; and the Russian army paused at Adrianople. Prompt on this came the quick demand of Britain that her fleet might pass the narrow channel of the Dardanelles; and presently the Turks might see with eyes, which showed no emotion, Russian officers and English sailors stroll at ease in the streets of Pera. The wires of all Europe thrilled with protests and with explanations; and courteous Ambassadors exchanged with a smile the stately fictions of diplomacy. The fleet of England had advanced for the greater safety of her subjects in Constantinople; the Russian army with a wider care had drawn close for the sake of all Christians cooped in that city full of dangers as of men. Nothing was said of any hope of gain. The Russian breathed no threat to seize and to hold his prey; the English admiral did not proclaim his power to go up into the Black Sea with his warships and cut off the supplies of the triumphant army. Natheless the game of check and countercheck was played, while phrases were exchanged;

In Pera

army and fleet lay still; there was a pause, a silence full of menace.

This was indeed a moment for Chaloner Coop. He was young; he was well and conscious of his recovered health; and young and well and vividly alive to his wellbeing he stood at the very centre of great events, with eye and ear attentive to the passing show and to the lightest rumour. He went hither and thither on the tip-toe of expectation. He woke every morning to a sense of his own good fortune. It was his duty to hear and to see and his duty was the finest of pleasures. So the whole man was one and all directed to a single purpose. For the moment he was the ideal reporter; and while he mastered the events of the day he was thrilled by a hope of events even more exciting for the morrow. He hugged himself because he was there. Again and again he felt that lifting of the heart, which a man may feel when by happy chance he is free of the crowd and away over a pleasant country with a good horse beneath him and the streaming pack in view, or which gives wings to the boy who has broken from the striving players and got away with the ball and feels in a moment his chance of a glorious goal. He is conscious of the shout of young voices and of the friends who ring the ground, and he scarcely feels the earth beneath his feet. Not the banquets of the rich nor the applause of Senates can give such joys as these.

Only one thing checked the full felicity of Chaloner, and that was the dullness of Stephen Calinari.

Stephen Calinari

Again and again he turned to his friend for sympathy and could not find enough to satisfy him. Stephen seemed to have lost some quality, which had been for his friend the secret of his charm. When he had laid the body of his father in that corner of the old walled garden, which the silent servant pointed out as his master's chosen place of burial, he seemed to have nothing else to do. He allowed himself to be carried to Pera; he seemed not to care where he was. He would not discuss; he would not oppose; he agreed too readily, but with no enthusiasm. He steadily regained his health but not his vivacity. Not even the sight of the Russian officers strolling at ease in the street beneath his window could rouse an interest in him—a sight which opened the eyes of Chaloner wide as saucers and set his fingers itching for the pen. At the very centre of great things Stephen was tired, bruised, a dull companion. Chaloner was infinitely patient with his friend, bringing to him with each new day new rumours, new hopes, new theories; but Stephen only turned with the patient smile of a deaf man, a deaf man amid the exciting murmurs of the time.

On the Shore of Marmora

CHAPTER XXXIII

ON THE SHORE OF MARMORA

STEPHEN, in the phrase of Chaloner, was not himself; but as the self grows and acquires, there is some lack of precision in saying at this or that moment that it is other than itself. Here was the same youth confronting his fellows, even in the same clothes; but he had arrived at a time of stagnation, which might be the beginning of deterioration, but might also be the prelude to a larger and a deeper life. He was numbed and dull. He had written nothing but one letter, a letter which he had written with strange difficulty and which seemed to him bald and dry when it was done. This he had sent to his mother on the evening of the day which followed the burial of Moro Bey; and in the early days at Pera, while he listened to the reports of Chaloner Coop and seemed to acquiesce in his theories and his plans, he cared not a jot in truth for anything but the coming of the English mail. When the expected letter came he was glad that his friend was out, glad of the silence of the house. He took the letter into his own room alone and opened it with hands which he could not keep steady. At first he could not read the clear firm writing; he had to shut his eyes for a minute or two; then with the paper pressed flat on the table under his nervous hand he read the letter slowly. When he had finished it he folded it carefully and laughed. Shocked by

Stephen Calinari

the sound of his laughter in that quiet room he looked around him as if he feared that he had been detected in a crime; his laughter had surprised him; he heard it so harsh and loud that he thought it must have reached even distant ears; he listened for feet hurrying up the stairs.

And yet the letter of Madame Calinari was excellent. She expressed, and expressed well, the feelings which were natural and becoming. She begged forgiveness from her son with a manner as graceful as it was unaffected. She had meant to do what was best. She had allowed him to believe that his father had died long ago. She too had thought him dead. For a long time she had not known that he was alive. She had thought it better for her son that he should think of his father as dead. It had been very perplexing, very painful for her. She was sure that her boy would feel that.

"And then your Grandfather," she wrote, giving to Grandada a title of greater solemnity, "was so nervously anxious that you should never know. He does not perhaps see things always with a very English eye, and I yielded to his wishes; but I see now, dear Steenie, that the whole truth is best. When I found that you had gone off suddenly to the East I was at first terribly alarmed, for I had always fancied him somewhere in that part of the world; but I persuaded myself that, even if he were still alive (and I shall never believe in my own convictions again), there were even then so many chances against your meeting. But strange things do happen in life,

On the Shore of Marmora

stranger than the novelists invent, I think; and I feel now that the whole truth is best and that nothing should be kept back, and that that is more the English way. But you know, dear, how much I feel bound to consider Grandada and his wishes. He has done everything for me since that great sorrow of my life. And it is for Grandada that I feel now that we are bound to keep this sad event secret from the world. I shall break it to Grandada, merely telling him that I have certain news of the death. I cannot expect him to feel about it as I do. To him it must be merely a release, the final removal of a constant anxiety; and it would not seem reasonable to him if I asked him to alter his way of life and to give up seeing his friends. You will know what I mean. I shall wear mourning in my heart; but in every other way it will be best that we should go on just as usual."

The letter ended, as it began, with some gentle sentiments, some melancholy reminiscences of the brief days of happiness before her great disillusion, and with words of real affection for the son. "This secret will be a new link between you and me," she wrote. It was a good letter; and Stephen, looking down upon it as it lay folded in his hand, told himself that most men, Chaloner for one, would admire it very much. It was full of nice feeling, as a sympathetic female friend would say if all female friends were not debarred from its perusal. Grandada's parties were to go on as usual, and the disturbed earth in that angle of the old Oriental garden was to be secret as the grave. Stephen did not deny that it

Stephen Calinari

was a good letter nor care to combat its conclusions. He did not know why it seemed to him inadequate, a crackling of thorns. It was like the sound of a voice overheard in another railway carriage in a pause of the clatter of the line, or like words at the play which seemed right enough but far away from life. He sat idle; he did not laugh again; he twisted the letter in his fingers; and at last, when he heard a footstep on the stair, he started and tore the paper quickly into little bits.

Although after the reading and the destruction of this letter Stephen was more at ease, he was not a whit more lively. He still puzzled and at moments even distressed the happy Chaloner. He was glad of the armistice, for he hoped that no more blood would be shed. "There has been enough blood," he said to himself often and sometimes aloud to his friend. He began to seem to the friend a man of one idea. He roused himself to visit the mosques, to try to be of use to the sick and wounded soldiers there, but he seemed to himself strangely inefficient; it was a new feeling for him. And then one day as he sat listless in his room Chaloner burst in upon him with news that then, even then, the Treaty of Peace was being signed in the Palace, that it would be proclaimed straightway to the army at San Stephano, and that he, spoiled child of Fortune that he was, had secured standing room on a steamer which was to start at once full of spectators for that historic show. Chaloner seized Stephen, thrust his hat into his hand and whirled him away to the steamer.

On the Shore of Marmora

It was early March, and the sea of Marmora rolled shoreward in waves, where rank on rank, with the wild wind flying overhead, stood silent the great army of the Czar. They had come far from their homes these stalwart peasants, sons of serfs, themselves called free; and now they stood, patient still, under the great clouds that sailed across this alien sky. Many thousands had gone forth and had failed to reach the goal, mowed down in regiments before the guns of Plevna or meeting death with rare stolidity in the blinding heat or in the winter cold of the high Balkans, which froze the snow as it fell upon their hair and eyelids. Patient, they had endured all things, and stood here, a remnant of vast armies, patient they too with the inherited patience of generations of serfdom. And from near heights Turkish soldiers, peasants they also and sons of peasants, remnant they also of armies which had fought with matchless valour under vain or treacherous leaders, looked down upon their conquerors with a dumb and stolid curiosity as of cattle looking over a gate.

Silent upon his horse sat the Grand Duke, still as a statue of bronze in the face of his silent army. A little behind him and on the same rising ground were his staff, and near to them the enterprise of Chaloner had gained a footing for himself and his friend. There was for Stephen a strange oppression in the air, a great pause of expectation in which he could scarcely breathe. Then in the distance was a flicker of dust, and presently a carriage with horses galloping. Straight to the mound on which the Grand

Stephen Calinari

Duke sat came the flying carriage, and pulled up short before him; and from it descended an eminent diplomatist, master of many wiles and bearer now of the great news that the Treaty of Peace was signed. The Grand Duke bowed and took a paper from the hand of the diplomatist, and with the same movement urged his horse to a canter. Through the long ranks he passed, faster and faster, till he rode at full gallop with all his glittering cohort at his heels. And as these horsemen passed like the wind, the knowledge passed from man to man, from rank to rank, that now at last was peace. It seemed as if, invisible, the angel Fame flew above the flying steeds trumpeting the news afar. The time of facing deadly guns, of marching over comrades, who writhed in torment, to wounds or death, the time of war was done; and a deep sound went up from all the host like a great sob of relief swelling on the dying wind. For the wind was sinking with the sun and a great light showing more and more amid the torn clouds in the ragged evening of the day.

When the Grand Duke had galloped through the lines and returned to his place, he thence made formal announcement of the peace; and then the army marched before him, all in due order, division by division, regiment by regiment, hour after hour moving slowly; and hour after hour the Grand Duke sat motionless on his horse till darkness grew around him and around his moving men. This sight Stephen saw standing by Chaloner on the knoll and staring with dumb pity for this army of the diggers of the earth

To London

plodding onward in the gathering gloom, weary of the endless march, weary of the slaughter of other diggers of the earth too like themselves. And then in the darkness which grew apace it seemed to the strained eyes of Stephen that after these grey-clad troops, passing now like shadows, came softly on the sheeted legions of the dead. Silent they came, these poor brigades of ghosts, marching without a sound, advanced guard of the night; and then Stephen remembered the dead face of his father and the body of that dead Turk which he had found in the wood; and some barrier seemed to give way within him and his heart beat thickly, eager for the lights of home, and he stood sobbing in the darkness.

CHAPTER XXXIV

TO LONDON

IN the dim light of the narrow passage, Chaloner stood at his friend's door, anxious, listening. Sleep had left him early and the day was very young, as he stood there with some trouble on his broad kind face, listening and screwing up his near-sighted eyes as if that alien trick could help his hearing. Since no sound reached him, he opened the door with extreme care, and putting on his spectacles as he noiselessly drew near to the bed, examined so much of Stephen's face as was visible above the bedclothes. Stephen stirred under the scrutiny, muttered incoherent words and woke staring at the intruder.

Stephen Calinari

"Look here!" said Chaloner firmly: "you ought to go home."

To Stephen it seemed that he had known that the words were coming; the answer was already on his tongue. "Yes," he said; "when can I get away?" The poignant emotion had passed with the night, but the desire of home remained; it made the words tremulous—"when can I get away?" After a minute, as his friend in silence contemplated him through round glasses, he added, "I can do no good; I am only a clog on you."

"Don't say that. I shall miss you every hour. But you are right; you ought to go."

"Is there a ship?" asked Stephen sitting up in bed. "How can I get away soonest?"

"Leave all that to me. I'll arrange everything. Only——"

"Only what? You are awfully good to me."

"Only," repeated Chaloner, coming close to the bed and studying him with care—"are you fit to go alone?"

Stephen laughed; and laughing lifted his friend's heart with gladness and great relief. He had not laughed like that for a long time past; it made music in the heart of his friend.

"I will chuck everything and go with you," said Chaloner, "if you think for a moment——"

"But I don't, I don't," cried out Stephen. "I am not so helpless as all that; I'll go, and go alone. You can't and shan't come. What would your paper say?"

"The paper is one thing and you are another, and

To London

you come first," said Chaloner rather gruffly. But truly his heart was singing and he was wondering at the depth of the anxiety which he had only half recognized, but which he now could measure by the greatness of his relief. To see Stephen off for home and to go back to his work was a prospect which satisfied him wholly. He was so fond of his comrade, that to see him without his proper confidence and courage had checked the free current of his own happy work a dozen times a day. Even when he had gone forth full of zeal, the thought of his friend had come to him again and again and stopped his quick foot or nimble pencil; he had imagined him sitting alone idle, useless, like a stricken creature. He had hurried back again and again to assure himself that all was well. Now, when Stephen laughed, he was sure that all was well. He pressed the hands which had distressed him by their idleness; and the moisture came to his eyes, which were always easily suffused with tears. He set to work with a stout heart to arrange everything; he even insisted on packing the portmanteau; and no long time had passed when he stood, almost blubbing, on the quay and waved a hand of cheer to the departing ship and the departing friend. He was confused between sorrow and joy; and he rushed back to his work as to the sure cure of all emotions.

Stephen too felt relief, as he looked his last on the golden tarnished city, and more and more relief as he was carried on and on. He could feel but little interest in his journey; he only cared to go forward.

Stephen Calinari

It was the mere movement which did him good. The traveller was quiet and at ease on the journey until it was almost done; but he grew nervous when he set foot again in his native land. As he drove from the London station through the lighted streets, his nervousness increased. He wanted and yet dreaded to see his mother. As the cab turned into the well-known street, he uttered a sharp exclamation. The mansion was all alight again; there was a row of carriages; his home-coming from Oxford leapt up before him in the darkness; he could not face a like scene. Quickly he thrust his head out of the window and called angrily to the cabman to stop. Then mastering his irritation he told the man to drive him to a hotel, a large hotel where he felt that he could lose himself in the crowd. The cab turned away from the unwelcome lights of his home and rumbled down a darker narrower street.

"Will they never be done with their jiggings and their junketings?" asked Stephen crossly of himself as he sat straight in the darkness of the old four-wheeler. When he reached his destination and had been received with the polite indifference of a large and prosperous hotel, he regained his equanimity and was a little ashamed of having lost it. Those were the junketings and jiggings to which his grandfather was accustomed. Small or great they took place, he supposed, on most evenings. And yet he was glad to have avoided them for that night at least. He had given no date for his arrival; and, as he had travelled straight through, he would not be expected yet.

To London

Tomorrow perhaps he would go home or on the next day, or soon. For the moment he would lie quiet, lost among travelling strangers; he would lie quiet and possess his soul. It was a comforting, almost an amusing, thought that nobody knew that he was in England. And if he was glad to be still, to lie for a day or two like a neglected boat in a backwater, he was not alarmed by his own wish; he assured himself that he need not fear drifting back into the lethargy, which he had left in the Levant. He was glad of his native land, glad of the English breakfast to which he sat down after a good night's rest, glad of the morning paper, which was the paper of that day and not of some day in the past. He unfolded the clean journal, which had no postmarks nor dirty stamps upon it, and looked peacefully for news as he breakfasted. There were telegrams and a letter from Constantinople; he only glanced at these and turned the page with pleasure. There was a column of social news and a familiar name caught his eye. He followed the short paragraph with his finger as he read it again slowly. The words were plain enough. He was more glad than before that he was alone and could consider quietly the engagement which was here gaily announced as an event stimulating to the Society of which the dainty writer claimed to be an intimate member. Here in plain terms was set forth the engagement of the charming Lady Elfrida and Lord Angus Archdale. "So she has made up her mind to it," Stephen murmured to himself, and swallowed his coffee so quickly that it

Stephen Calinari

burnt his mouth and brought tears to his eyes. "It's all right, it's all right," he added to himself; "it's most appropriate—and still I am well." He added the last words after a pause. Indeed the announcement seemed to have aroused him, to make him feel better. He emptied his cup more calmly and looked for other news. Only he caught himself presently muttering "Little Elf! Little Elf!" in the midst of a perusal of the state of the money market. He could not concentrate his attention on money that morning. The last quotations failed in lucidity. So glancing on he came to a column on sport and found himself laughing as he read the solemn observations on the University crews now in training at Putney. He looked at the window, and lo the day was fair! Fair it must be since even the window of the hotel in that morning hour glimmered with a promise of day. Stephen rose from his little round table with a desire of movement. He would postpone his home-going; he had no wish to talk about engagements nor of Society nor of young women; he would be alone for a short time longer. And he would walk away somewhere and think over things as he walked. He hoped that long lugubrious-looking fellow was worthy of Elf. And why not? He thought that that was the sort of man whom girls admired. And doubtless also he was held a good fellow by other men. "Well—may they be happy!" he said to himself, stepping briskly down the street; and "If she be not fair for me," he hummed and felt debonair, tasting springtide in the air of the old grimy town.

On Hammersmith Bridge

CHAPTER XXXV

ON HAMMERSMITH BRIDGE

AS Stephen was stepping westward, and finding pleasure in the exercise, he made up his mind to walk as far as Hammersmith. He would see a touch of young green perhaps on the banks of the river, and perhaps one of the rival crews at practice. So he stepped forward with a purpose, and scenes of the past went with him and now and then some fancy of the future. On the whole, being in England on one of her promising mornings, though rather tender at heart, he was happier than he had been for some time past. He was a little tired, but only healthily tired, when he came to the old suspension bridge and was glad to lean his elbows on the flat top of the iron boundary and look peacefully down at the water.

The tide was low but flowing up fast and bringing a sense of life to the dull old river. On the mud bank on Stephen's left two barges were stranded, of which the nearer had spread its large red sail to be dried in the air. Beyond the barges was a mass of square solid building, and from the tall chimneys the abundant smoke showed pale grey against the darker grey of the sky. On the other bank of the river were trees but still black and with no sign of green for the watcher on the bridge. He wondered if close inspection would show the tiny folded leaves about the

Stephen Calinari

grimy trunks; he had half a mind to go and see, but he was comfortable and lazy and stayed still. There he hung, as the young Tennyson hung on the bridge at Coventry, but with no poem to exercise his idleness. Idle he stood and unashamed, and watched the water swell beneath him, of an opaque green in colour, with now and then a voyaging scrap of paper or a little fleet of straws and frequent greasy-looking bubbles, all coming quickly to the bridge. It was disappointing that the sun was coy. Only a gleam came now and then touching the water or the trailing smoke. And yet the suggestion of spring was there, and the youth leaning on his arms felt something of its delicate enchantment. Then suddenly his eyes grew more alert. Far down the river, coming up fast on the fast tide, was a narrow line, and then it was a racing boat, and then he could almost see the colour of blades as they turned, and he guessed that it was the Oxford crew. They stopped some way below and lay on the tide listening to the measured words of the coach addressed to them from the little launch which drifted up beside them. Then they got forward and came towards the bridge again at a slow stroke, careful and stately, reaching out and rowing clean.

Stephen peered down from his high place, almost holding his breath as he tried to distinguish the members of the crew who were moving like one. Yes, there was Hal, there was his mighty friend, swinging, as of yore, patient, majestic, with his eyes on the back before him. Stephen laughed aloud, partly for

On Hammersmith Bridge

mere pleasure in the sight of his friend, partly for mockery. It seemed to him as if a long time had passed since he had seen that great creature driving the river with his blade; and he fancied him day after day of all this long and fateful time swinging like a pendulum and seeing nothing but the appointed back. And meanwhile he—his thoughts leapt back to himself and moved him to wonder. What had he not seen? What had he not felt since their parting in somnolent Oxford? He felt as if he were another man, far other than that confident youth who had left his friend to swing on the familiar stream. He had found life and love and death, and the months had been years for him.

Though they were rowing a slow stroke, the boat came quickly with the surging tide up to the bridge, and Stephen looked down smiling on the thick fair hair of the young Viking, his friend. Then they swept under the bridge, and Stephen crossed the road and watched them round the curve which has been decisive of many a University race. He had a glimpse of Hal's earnest face as they left the bridge behind. When he had stood a little while looking up the river he walked to the Surrey end of the bridge and down the old towing path towards Putney. The sight of his friend had made him realize more clearly than ever before how he himself was changed; and as he walked he recognized as part of the change that the career, which had satisfied all his aspirations, looked now far different in his eyes. A fanciful comparison occupied him as he went down the bank. If he were

Stephen Calinari

to take the first step which he had purposed before he went away; if he were to become a member of Parliament, would he be swinging presently in a party boat, wearing the party colours, going on or stopping at the command of a coxswain-whip, bellowed at now and then by the party leaders on their fussy little launch? All this party business, this endless training and practice and minute arrangements for the winning of party triumphs, seemed wearisome to his tired fancy. He thought of the business of the country scamped and muddled in the odd hours left over from the full time dedicated to mutual recrimination; he thought of the obvious reforms of old and shameful abuses postponed year after year to the exciting combats of the Ins and Outs. And the people would have it so. When the University boatrace was decided they turned with good-natured interest to the competition of the Liberals and Conservatives. It did not seem to Stephen on that morning by the river a very interesting game; the public certainly took it less seriously than football or Australian cricket matches; and yet he could recall the zeal with which he had looked forward to it so short a time ago. It seemed wonderful to him that he could only remember the feeling and not bring it back; was the want in him or in the prizes of life that on that morning at least they seemed so poor? Here came the Cambridge boat riding up also on the tide, and Stephen stood still to look at it. It passed on, sedate and majestic as the rival crew, attended also by its posse of instructors; it was like the official opposi-

On Hammersmith Bridge

tion which a victory at Mortlake would transform in a moment to the Government of the country.

Down by the boathouses were a gathering of boatmen and of loafers with a few of those young men, well fed and warmly clad and with black pot hats upon their heads, who are at leisure to attend all exhibitions of sport, including the three-day cricket matches of the summer. Not for the first time Stephen wondered with faint interest how these other young men, who certainly were not of the class where idleness is less surprising, gained their livelihood. He leant against the railings in front of a boathouse, warmed by his walk and pleased with a pale sunlight which had pierced the grey veil of the day. Little events of the waterside awoke in him a languid interest. A lonely sculler followed his slender craft down to the edge of the water, stepped carefully into it and was pushed firmly out by the crouching waterman. A stout gentleman, who had rowed for his University in other days, trotted by on his stout cob and went on up the river for a sight of his crew.

Little events passed before the young man's eyes till at last there was a movement among the spectators, and he looked up with a livelier interest to see the Oxford crew returning. Majestically they passed before him and disappeared below the bridge, and presently they reappeared and came in neatly to the landing stage. In turn each oarsman slipped his oar from the rowlock, rose in his place and stepped ashore, and then walked up on the broad path which lay open through the respectful crowd. Each carried

Stephen Calinari

his oar on his shoulder. Clean and clean-limbed they looked, wholesome youth of England in their first manhood. They showed no consciousness of the eyes which scanned them. They looked neither to right nor left; they wore an expression of indifference as of men engaged in some drudgery of every day. Indeed they slouched upon their way as if they would make as little as they could of chests and shoulders and the muscles of their arms and legs. Stephen stood in the crowd smiling as he thought again with what an air a Latin crew would move buoyant after the morning's work. He had a vision of young Frenchmen with their chests thrown forward and the muscles of the calf accentuated as they almost danced to the boathouse. An air of indifference was the right thing for the young Briton. When in due order they had leaned their oars against the wall they all trooped back again to the water's edge, and all together lifted their light craft and bore it up through the same attentive onlookers. A word or two passed from one to another, but no word nor glance for the spectators.

Stephen, in the front rank of his half of the little crowd, could almost have touched the arm of Hal as the boat came slowly past him shoulder high. Perhaps mere chance, perhaps a sudden consciousness of a familiar presence, made Hal turn his face for a moment to the crowd so rigorously ignored, and his eyes opened round with wonder full in the eyes of his friend. No check was possible then; the precious boat was borne at a slow even pace to its own place,

On Hammersmith Bridge

but so soon as it had been deposited with all tenderness the young giant came plunging back through the loitering folk, who made way for him with quickened interest. "Steve!" he cried over the heads of the people, and a moment later he was wringing his friend's hand and hauling him in spite of protest to the quarters of the crew.

As Hal washed and rubbed and clothed himself again, he threw out fragments of talk about this or that oarsman, about the time between bridges on this day and the other, and with frank pleasure of the merits of the rival crew. His was a heart that rejoiced in a worthy foe. Slowly however it dawned on his great mind that he was doing most of the talking, and that there was no precedent for this in former conversations with his friend.

"I say," he asked at last, "is anything the matter?"

"No," said Stephen, who had sat silent, listening, sometimes smiling.

"Here have I been jawing about myself, or the crew, which is the same thing, while you—— Oh, you must be ill!"

He came to Stephen, laid his great hands on his shoulders and turned him to the light of the window. "You look all right," he said; and indeed the smile, which was Stephen's answer, lighted the face and made it familiar in the eyes of his friend.

"Did you see any fighting?" asked Hal greedily. "George!" he exclaimed, as the other nodded; "fancy that! You were under fire?"

Stephen Calinari

"I suppose they'd call it that," said Stephen, relapsing into dreariness.

"Well, it's jolly good to have you back, old chap," said Hal; "and what's your next game? Prime Minister?"

Stephen shook his head. He did not even laugh at the suggestion.

"Parliament, anyway, by way of a beginning?"

"No."

Stephen was surprised by the decision of his own negative. His thoughts and wishes, it seemed, had been gathering to a purpose, of which he had been but partly conscious. It did him good to hear his own "No." At least he was sure now what his next step would not be.

"Then what in thunder are you going to do?" asked Hal.

"I think I had better wait a bit—try to find out—learn something, if I can find somebody to teach me."

Hal stood over him gazing on him with deep wonder. "You?" he said, and seemed incapable of further speech. "Here, come out into the air," he added presently; it was his favourite remedy for the ills of life, the prime unraveller of perplexities. He hauled Stephen forth into the air, this new Stephen, unresisting, uncertain, with a shocking tameness.

"Do you know what I think of you?" he asked when he had him out on the towing path. "I think you've been jolly well frightened."

"Yes," said Stephen.

On Hammersmith Bridge

Hal looked at him with obvious alarm. Then he determined to take it as a joke and laughed. He struck him playfully on the shoulder, took him firmly by the arm and walked him away.

"How did you find your people?" he asked presently, returning with comfort to an everyday matter-of-fact line of thought.

"I haven't found them," said Stephen with a faint laugh.

"You haven't been home?"

"I only arrived yesterday."

"And you didn't go home?" There was now both amazement and anxiety in his tone. "You haven't been to your mother?" he asked.

Stephen was suddenly irritable under the examination. "Don't bother," he said, twisting himself in the other's grip. "I am going today—yes, now, if you'll let loose."

Hal opened his large hand and let Stephen's arm go free, while he stared at him perplexed, like a big dog under new conditions. Stephen seized the hand which had relaxed its hold and pressed it eagerly.

"I'll come again," he said quickly; "and don't you worry about me; it would be bad for training."

Hal laughed, and Stephen, laughing responsive, hurried away towards Putney Bridge and in search of a hansom.

Hal's simple wonder made Stephen feel mean. His mother seemed to speak to him in the voice of his friend, and with a like simplicity to ask why he had not come straight to her. Surely it was an ob-

Stephen Calinari

vious duty and a natural instinct too; a puppy with a bruised paw would do as much; to delay with petty fastidious doubts was to be something less than puppy. The smooth hansom was not quick enough for the youth's impatience. Was it a son's part to criticise a mother, to decide that she was inadequate, not profound enough to minister to the needs of his profundity? If she were not this and not that, she was at least his mother, a mother kind and gentle always and patient of his childish whims. He longed for the mere motherhood—beneath all thought and all thinking about thought it drew the mere childhood in him. He could not sit still; he leaned back in a corner; he leaned forward on the doors. He was possessed with fears. What if he found her ill? What if she had been in need of him, and he sleeping in a hotel close at hand? What if she had died in the time between that hour when he might have gone to her and this moment when the cab turned the corner of her street? How suddenly death came! He had learned that at least. He held the money ready in his hand, and he was offering it across the roof to the driver before the hansom had stopped.

"Is my mother well?" he asked of the familiar butler who was beginning to express surprise and pleasure at the sight of their young gentleman.

She was well, she was at home, she was alone; and Stephen ran up the noiseless thickly carpeted stairs and opened the door of the boudoir. There amid the dainty silks and Cupids delicately painted she sat robed in black with fine white lace about it. He had

At the Dinner Table

opened the door so quietly that for a moment she went on reading; then she turned her head and saw her boy standing in the doorway. She gave a low cry of joy as she rose, tall and pale, to greet him; and Stephen coming to her without a word leaned his young head on her shoulder, uncritical, loving, at rest. A moment later he was sobbing with the abandonment of a little child.

CHAPTER XXXVI

AT THE DINNER TABLE

FOR a time the sense of home was enough for Stephen. He was at home and at rest, glad of peace and of the presence of his mother, who was like an embodiment of peace. The stillness of the spacious house lapped him round; the thick carpets stilled the noise of feet; the machinery of every day moved without friction, without discussion. In this he recognized the one valuable element in luxury. If his mother watched him, it was with a tact so fine that the soothing influence of time and place was not disturbed for him. She did not speak to him of his father. At the door of her bedroom on his first night at home she had turned to kiss her boy a second time; and, as she held him very tenderly, she had whispered in his ear, "We share a memory, dear," and he had kissed her without a word. She felt that he could not yet bear to talk or to hear about this man, so near in life and now so immeasurably far.

Stephen Calinari

She felt too that at first the mere presence of his grandfather made Stephen uneasy; she guessed that he feared always some allusion to the dead. In fact the sight of his grandfather, so lively dapper and gay, brought always to the eyes of the young man a vision of a face made pitiful, made almost noble, by death. Of course the dead man had injured his grandfather, had injured his mother. He did not question that; he questioned nothing; he could not bear this line of thought. At a sudden movement of the lively little old man, who was so quick in movements, Stephen would start like a guilty man. He was very nervous; he felt in the air unspoken criticism of the man who had wronged them all, but who had died for him. He could not but know that his grandfather was happier for that death; he could not deny that he was right to be happier; but the happiness hurt him none the less. His father had died for him; that was a simple truth.

Grandada seemed wholly unconscious of any want of cordiality in the prodigal who had returned. He held him by the arms and rejoiced in his presence, standing on tiptoe to see his face more nearly, calling out with a truly Ægæan want of reserve about his good looks. Madame Calinari was ready with smooth speech to turn the thoughts of her father into another course; she would drop the name of a duchess, or ask after some titled youth who had made his début in the city under the shield of this brilliant little man of money; or she drew her own boy away with some question or some appeal for his opinion.

At the Dinner Table

She did not worry him with a defence of Grandada. Only now and then she dropped a word about his anxiety in the days of Stephen's absence. "Poor Grandada!" she would say, "he came to me almost every day with some new fear for your safety." She did not insist on it; she mentioned it as a matter of no importance; and the stricken youth could take it so. Presently she had to break to him that there was a dinner party imminent. It had been planned before his coming, and the night was near. She took it as a matter of course that he would dine. A convenient bachelor had been called to the country, and so made room for him; and Stephen did not refuse. He knew that hospitality had become a necessity to his grandfather; that he flourished on it and fretted without it. Once a week at least, even out of season, he must see his table furnished with expectant guests. Stephen made no comment; he would not confess to his mother, hardly to himself, how he shrank from this common festival. Because it was common it affected him the more. Dinner party after dinner party seemed to stretch away before him in the house which should have been a house of mourning. The funeral baked meats were in his nostril; the wide vacant staircase was thronged with guests, who crowded on him, ascending and descending like angels in the dream of Jacob. He was alarmed by the depth of his distaste to this course of imagined people of fashion. Even the few who had been bidden to this dinner were on his nerves for days before they came. Their names and

Stephen Calinari

the discussion about their precedence irritated him almost beyond endurance. So short a time ago he had listened to such discussions with amusement and with amiable contempt; but now a blight was on the bloom of all frivolity; all his sense of humour seemed to have dried up.

The guests who came to that dinner were old, rather contemporaries of his grandfather than of his mother. To Stephen, tasting with distempered appetite, they seemed unreal as phantoms—the men built up by dexterous valets, the women by ladies' maids, and all prepared with pains for the important work of the banquet. To feed and drink seemed the prime matter of their lives; they lived by entrées alone. He thought that the whole day had been given to the preparation of appetite; he guessed that the old peer in the riband fingered in his waistcoat pocket a helpful dinner pill, that the old general with the flushed face treasured a lozenge which would counteract the champagne. The poor youth saw every wrinkle in the thin dowager's face, the grains of powder, the black lines under weary eyes; he noted every restless movement of the fat lady, who was so tightly laced that no position on her chair could be endured for more than a minute. She heaved and turned about and gasped as she flung her wide open fan to left and right. And these and such as these, who but the other day amused and pleased the boy just fresh from Oxford, now filled him with horror. In vain he accused himself of absurd morbidness; in vain he reminded himself that these were well-bred people,

At the Dinner Table

fruit of a fine civilization. In the midst of dinner he looked round upon them with real fear. They all seemed to him transformed, all in different degree under the influence of drink. The brilliant beautiful room full of choice guests was like the hall of Circe in his eyes. An old diner-out, who had been a diner-out for fifty years, and famous for his stories, began to tell again over the quails a story which he had told with much success across the fish; and Stephen saw the doubt dawn in the furtive eyes, and marked the hesitation of the old tongue, which moistened the dry lips. Two women began across him to compare their sufferings; one was going to one watering-place, the other to another; both were sleepless. "Oh, my dear, such agonies! You can't imagine! Have you tried Langbad?" "Oh, yes; and Spitzbad and Guggenbad and Spizbubenheim." They seemed to Stephen to mock and mow like witches, as if at any moment one or other might fizz up the dining-room chimney when her broom had come for her. Their old eyes kindled with malicious joy at the misfortunes of a common friend; it seemed the only source of pleasure left to them. The lights, the silver, the priceless flowers, which had delighted Stephen in the year just gone, oppressed him now. Fragments of the political economy which he had read at school and college buzzed at his ear; jewels and hair powder, orchids and forced fruit, the waste of wealth which brought not even pleasure, vexed his soul. The talk, which filled the gaps between the varied meats, sounded dull and base; every action was in-

Stephen Calinari

terpreted by the lowest possible motive; if there were a moment's animation, it seemed due to malice. As he looked from one to another, he read deep in all their eyes under the coldness, under the cynicism, under the vacancy, one fear—the fear of death. It was like madness, but he could not help it. Vainly he told himself again and again that he was a fool; that each of these men and women lead or had led his or her life, and that the lightest of them was much more than a mere eater and drinker. Vainly he would force himself to a view more sane. The harpies had fouled his feast. The massive plate, the golden light, the pictures on the wall, were hideous to him; in contrast he seemed to see long streets of squalid houses, dens thronged by half-starved women and children; and the grim point of the grim comedy seemed that these who were called wretched were not a jot less happy than those who had everything which money can provide. It was the essence of nightmares. "Oh, my dear," one old woman was saying to another, "I have not had a wink of sleep for the last six months"; and her state seemed the more gracious in that she was safe at least from awful dreams. She nodded her painful head under its diamond crown.

When Stephen had cloaked the grim shoulders of the last dowager in the hall, he saw on the hall table a letter addressed to himself, and he opened and read it as he slowly ascended the stairs. In the largest of the drawing-rooms Madame Calinari was standing by the fireplace yawning peacefully behind her fan,

At the Dinner Table

while her father with brilliant eyes was moving about and congratulating her and himself on the success of the entertainment.

"Mervillier surpassed himself," he said. "Bludyer told me that he had dined out in London more than any living man, and that he had never eaten a better dinner. Fancy that!"

Grandada had skipped up and down the high staircase with half a dozen ladies, and with reluctance had yielded the last delaying dowager to his grandson. He appeared vivacious as a child fresh from school; and Stephen, coming into the room with his letter in his hand, looked at him with wonder. He was so much older than his grandfather. From him he turned his eyes to his mother and read a gentle question in her looks. As they ascended to the next floor she kept her hand upon his arm, and at the door of her room she gently drew him in.

"You are tired, dear," she said; "you are not fit yet for parties, for strangers; you want change."

For answer he put the letter in her hands.

She read it slowly. "Eleanor Coop?" she said aloud when she came to the signature and looked to him for explanation.

"You know, mother," he said a little fretfully; "they are Coop's people—the people of Coop who took me to the war."

The question which she wanted to ask was if there were daughters in the family; but, wise woman, she kept the question within her teeth.

"You see that she expects Chaloner home at once,"

Stephen Calinari

Stephen said—"much sooner than he thought. I should like to go and meet him there."

"Is it healthy?" she asked. "Will it do you good? Grandada and I are going to Brighton for Easter."

"I would rather go to the Coops," said Stephen. "I mean," he added quickly, "that it will rest me more. I will try to be of more use to you after Easter."

"I don't want you to be of use," she said, "but only to be well and happy," and she kissed him very tenderly.

CHAPTER XXXVII

WITH THE COOPS

WHEN the train drew up at the platform in a leisurely manner, which seemed fit for the arrival at this ancient cathedral city, there was the doughty Chaloner grinning amiably. Burnt by suns and nipped by frosts he showed traces of the hard work of a war correspondent. His long rides to the nearest end of a telegraph wire, his uncertain and often inadequate meals, the strain of writing under fire and at last fever had made him gaunt and grim; and the time of comparative leisure since the collapse of the Turkish defence had done little to restore his normal curves. But yet he looked stalwart and square and pleasant in the eyes of his friend, with his clear eyes and smile of welcome. His light waterproof overcoat was shining with rain and his good flat face, where the cheek bones were still eloquent of short commons, was wet also. The harshness of March wind had passed that day;

With the Coops

rain had fallen, ceased, and fallen since the dawn; and all the air was soft with a fertile moisture. And now, as evening drew gently on, the melting clouds were slowly withdrawn and faint spaces of washed blue appeared. Yet still the rain persisted, soft and still, transfused with liquid light, a veil of delicate vapour: the finger tips felt strangely smooth as the thumb passed across them.

Chaloner's grip was not smooth as he wrung the hand of his friend. He could not speak for pleasure. He stood shaking his hand and smiling. "I was soon after you," he said at last; "they wired for me as if they could not live without me; I came like a flash and now they don't know what to do with me. So like an Editor! So here I am with the mater, till they remember what they wanted me for. Ah, I am glad to see you! But you don't look quite right yet. Too subdued? Eh? Confide your portmanteau to the family wheelbarrow boy; and we'll walk. Isn't this vapour-bath delicious after the dry East?" And so prattling, when he had once found his tongue, he led Stephen out from the quiet station into the more quiet street. There they stopped to argue if it were raining or not; they decided that it was not and Stephen put down his umbrella. The empty street was before them, shining with watery sunshine, with here and there a puddle like silver; and high in the air the great cool grey tower of the cathedral reigning over its peaceful city. "It's fine; it's fine," murmured Chaloner; "it's a jolly good thing after mosques and minarets! It is good to have it there, even if you don't go inside. Come round the

Stephen Calinari

outside—it's very little out of the way—and let us view the historic spot where the great Calinari slept like a tramp and his faithful Boswell found him lying like a fallen angel! It's an immense incident; it simply makes the biography!"

"I shan't need a biographer," said Stephen softly.

"Oh, won't you just?" said Chaloner. "Here you are!" He arrested his friend by the buttress, which had sheltered him on that night which seemed so long ago; but Stephen felt a slight impatience at the sight.

"What a young ass I was!" he said with conviction, and began to walk away.

"I shall make a drawing of this corner," said Chaloner following his friend, "for the book of the future. Ass, indeed! And as for 'young ass,' you are but a few months older than that fallen angel, who lay so softly sleeping under the minster wall."

To this Stephen made no answer; but, as he continued to walk away, his friend must needs follow him; and so together they passed from the precincts and drew near to the old and comfortable dwelling of the Coops. At the sight of his home Chaloner again stopped and again laid his hand on Stephen's arm. "You won't mind," he said—but he peered into his face with some doubt—"you won't mind; they live awfully simply, you know; you may call it dinner; it ends the day anyway. You were jolly hungry when we fed you before; but I don't know how you'll stand the Coop customs and cookery when you are fresh from purple and fine linen and the titillations of a French cook."

With the Coops

"They are some of the things I wanted to get away from," said Stephen; "don't make me out a snob and a pig, and do take me to your mother."

Chaloner produced a key and let him into the quiet house, and they passed through the hall into the old wainscotted parlour, which opened on to that luxuriant tangled garden, which was Betty's especial care. All the family were abroad. The house was full of peace and smelt like a nosegay; windows stood open to the garden, which was breathing after rain; and in the low but spacious bedroom, where his portmanteau had arrived before him, Stephen seated himself by the window and leaned out at ease to enjoy the solitude, the peace, the perfume of the time: it seemed to penetrate his soul. A wilderness perhaps it was, but a wilderness of sweets; and more exquisite now when it was little but promise than later as a riot of bloom. There were a few slender fruit trees but only one was just touched with blossom on its southern face; and around and about these little trees were wild-growing shrubs, elder and pushing privet, young yew and shining holly, all struggling up together, all bound about with straggling clinging brambles and the long trailing wreaths of brier-rose. The elder bushes showed grey buds and the pervading privet little points of green, and under the bare brown twigs the little sturdy evergreens were scarcely seen; but now all the brown thicket was shining with waterdrops, each drop a point of light. This spreading thicket was as a barrier between the wide gravelled walk, which lay before the parlour windows, and a fine space of grass, which lay around an ancient

Stephen Calinari

sundial crowning its wide shallow steps of grey stone. Some of the grass was cut short and some left rough that above the slender spears the daffodils, which were Betty's pride, might rear their queenly heads with best effect. The evening light slanted through those golden flowers and made them doubly fair and unsubstantial as a fairy gift. The old stone steps of the dial shone wet on the side towards the west; all the air was full of life, and trees and shrubs seemed as if in a moment they would break to the fullness of verdure. Then, as if the sweet moisture of the air had found a voice, a thrush began to sing. As the young man leaned at the window, listening, looking, breathing deep, from the lower end of the garden, slowly drawing nearer to the house but turning aside to each little court of beloved daffodils, came Bet, the gardener. She seemed to the eyes of the tired youth an embodiment of health and goodness, simple in dress and in movement, a maiden of the older and simpler poets. Some consciousness of man's eyes came to her and she looked away from her nearest daffodils up to the windows of her home. It was no surprise to her to see the face of her brother's friend, but she could not prevent the quick colour from flushing her wholesome fairness; it was one of the crosses of her happy life that she blushed absurdly for nothing. The evening light was on the blushing face and touched it, as the daffodils, with a beauty not its own. She smiled and nodded and passed on into the house and left her garden drowsy; a soft shadow passed across it and the fluting of the thrush was stilled.

It was a happy Easter for Stephen. Idleness was

With the Coops

good for him at this time; and idleness and Mrs. Coop ministered to a mind diseased. Mrs. Coop took care of him, thoughtful of his comfort, taking note of the food which he seemed to like, cheerful, restful, motherly. She was never so happy as when she was cossetting somebody; she was often in her kitchen; she encouraged her cook to new achievements in the art of nourishment; she eyed her guest as a farmer eyes the young beast that he would fatten; it was with difficulty, or so her eldest son declared, that she refrained from prodding his ribs with a critical forefinger. Stephen was deeply pleased, as the days slipped by, all alike, all busy and restful. Mother and daughters came and went on many errands all through the day, till at evening a noisier entrance proclaimed the return of the boys. In the common room, amid the coming and the going, Chaloner was making holiday by the rapid formation of a book vivid with impressions of the late war. A man who had written brilliantly amid bursting shells could compose with a fine appreciation of calm amid female relations who conversed across his head, with the occasional passage of a boy who flashed through the room and left both doors wide open behind him. They were a cheerful family; they breakfasted at eight o'clock and even before breakfast they were cheerful.

Stephen had known no home life like this, so simple, so friendly, so frank. The frankness amazed him. He wondered at the frequent war of words, the mutual criticism with so little offence, the free discussion of the many things which were touched on by the Coop philosophy. The mother for pure sport would throw

Stephen Calinari

the apple of discord on the table and to it the children would go in liveliest debate. Generally Chaloner and Jinny were the chief disputants; but Betty would place a word and a blush at times and Neddy too; and Mat showed a fine turn for stimulating contradiction. And still a large and a good humour prevailed. At the round table in the evening they gathered as if to begin the day, with never a sign of weariness. And yet each day was full of work for each; and much of the daily work was for others; and this kept their life sweet; and near by and over the little lives arose the great cathedral, a religion in stone, elevating and sanctifying these work-a-day folk, so simple, healthy and good, a presence and a power from generation to generation. "It's the way to take life," said Stephen to Chaloner with conviction after the first few days.

"It's the way for us, all right," said his friend, "for human nature's daily food people; but for you! You mustn't be content with this sort of thing. There's your career, career! Please to remember that your career is my affair. My hope of fame is in your career! Think of poor Bozzy!"

"Hang my career!" said Stephen.

Each day had its work for each; but it was a Coop custom that no work should be serious after the evening meal. In summer this meal began in cheerful daylight, in winter under yellow lamplight. Sometimes they waited on each other; sometimes they had the help of an old maid who knew her value and took part in the talk when she pleased, supplying a fact or a correction or a rebuke for the rapacity of the boys, and laugh-

In the Garden

ing grimly when she was amused by the conversation. When the leisurely meal was at an end, they wandered into the next room. There was another large round table, planted in the centre of the room, and in the centre of the table a shaded lamp; and around this the family seated themselves, and wrote or drew, or read with comfortable elbows; till perhaps a chance remark set the winged words flying again and presently all were talking at once. Stephen liked to lean his elbows on the table with the family circle, or to emulate with small success the quick skilful drawings of Chalonier, with a boy critical and affectionate leaning on each shoulder. Or Mrs. Coop would order him into the easiest easy chair, and he would lean back in great content and watch the pleasant clever faces in the tempered yellow light.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

IN THE GARDEN

IT was a shock to Stephen, taking his ease, when Mrs. Coop proclaimed one day that her patient was now well enough to pay a visit to the Deanery.

"But I haven't been ill," said Stephen.

"Then all the more are you well enough to visit the Deanery," and Mrs. Coop chuckled pleasantly at this exhibition of feminine logic.

"But Hal is my friend," said Stephen, still reluctant; "and I know that he isn't there. He has gone fishing."

Stephen Calinari

"Never mind," said she. "You must go and see his people. Think of us! They'll say we drugged you."

Stephen, who each day found new pleasure in the character of obedient son of the house, sought the cathedral close on the afternoon of the same day and paid his tardy visit to Hal's people. He thought that these good people received him stiffly; but after all that was perhaps the effect of contrast with the genial Coops. The Dean's wife was an anxious lady. She had been a London girl, who for some five seasons or more had gone to many balls and had ridden in the park when her prettier sister did not want the horse. When she married the Vicar, she thought of herself as abjuring the pomps and vanities; but after her marriage she found the pomps and vanities recur at times; and when her own daughters reached the dancing age, she felt pangs because they did not enjoy the advantages which she had had and which were merely the old pomps and vanities under another name. She told herself often, and sometimes told the Dean, her husband, that her own besetting sin was worldliness; but the robust father of Hal laughed and patted her long cheek and said that she was not a bad woman but too anxious, and that if she was a social Martha she must try to be a Mary also; and she tried and was anxious about her efforts. The Coops were a recurring anxiety also. She felt unnecessarily responsible for them, as if it were her duty to define their position in society. She shook her head over them and their strange ways, and then she blamed herself for judging them by a society

In the Garden

rather than by a Christian standard. She received Stephen in a drawing-room arrayed after the pattern of the paternal mansion in Belgrave Square; and when she spoke to him of the Coops she used careful phrases, which, he felt sure, had done the same duty a thousand times. The Coops were so careless of the usual civilities—making calls and all that. One really did not know how to take them. The girls were really nice and said to be clever, especially Jane; but they did make such strange friends. You met them walking any day in the High Street with shop girls or servant girls or really anybody. But they were really very nice and good and charitable. They were even religious in a strange way of their own; you might find any or all of the family in the cathedral at any unexpected hour and seeming most devout. Such were the phrases familiar in the mouth of the Dean's good wife. They were heard with some impatience by the youngest of her daughters, who most resembled her big brother Hal.

"Father says they are the best Christians in the place," she said with some asperity.

"Oh, your father!" said the Dean's wife in that tone of contempt with which a devoted wife dismissed the verdicts of a husband by whose judgment she guides her life. "It really is odd," she said after a pause and with her most candid air, "for they really are nice people." And then she added with a little deprecatory laugh, "The mother is really well connected. I have always heard she was something to some Irish peer—Lord Bundoran, I think."

Stephen hoped that he showed a polite interest.

Stephen Calinari

"But the newspaper son!" continued the lady with a movement of the hands; "he really is impossible!" She seemed to throw him from her with a fine gesture.

"That's a pity," said Stephen, "for he is my particular friend."

"Ah! Men are so different," said the lady enigmatically; and Stephen rose to go. He had been polite; he had heard that his friend Hal was in full enjoyment of his usual health; and now with a strange exaltation of the heart he hurried back to his Coops.

His Coops were in their choicest humour. Ned had bowled well in his first game of the year and Mat had made runs; and all their family were thrilled with pleasure, as if they had come into a fortune.

"Isn't it glorious?" asked the hearty mother as she led Mat half-reluctant into the evening meal with her arm round his neck.

"Splendid!" said Stephen.

"And last week he was top of his class, and Neddy did the best essay of all the younger boys. I can't think how you smart people can send your boys away to school."

"Your boys are different," said Stephen, smiling; "lions at school and lambs at home!"

"Lambs!" cried out Mat with a leonine growl.

"The mater couldn't do without their day-by-day news," said Chaloner, smiting Mat upon the shoulder. "But how about your visit?" he asked, as they were all seated round the table. "Did they tell you that I was impossible?"

Stephen laughed and nodded.

In the Garden

"And did she touch on the Irish peer by chance?" asked Mrs. Coop, beaming.

"She did mention a Lord Bun—Bun—something."

"He just saves us," said Jinny tartly; "and the fact that he is Irish gives an aristocratic explanation of our eccentricities."

"I don't believe in him as a connection," said Mrs. Coop; "and anyway he is a bit of a rogue."

"Peer or peasant," said her eldest son, "you can't be explained, dear mummy, without a bit of the Irish. If you carried a muff, there'd be the butt of a shillelagh sticking out at one end of it."

"It would be mighty handy for my family," said his mother, with a poor attempt at a brogue.

"She really said kind things about the family," said Stephen; "only she looked as if she was afraid of you."

"She jolly well funks the shillelagh in the muff," said Mat, nodding wisely.

"She is a good woman," said Mrs. Coop, "according to her light, and who can be more?" And from this large verdict the talk turned away to matters more interesting—the prospects of cricket, the new room for the Girls' Club, the coming entertainment in the Town Hall, and above all the promise of Spring. The family took the keenest interest in the coming of primrose, daffodil and cowslip, in the young larch woods powdered with delicate green, and the unpacking of the brown buds of the beech trees into crisp vernal leaves; and on a rare half-holiday, when Chaucer's spirit moved them, they would wander out from the streets with baskets and tin cases and up on to the sloping downs

Stephen Calinari

to explore copse, thicket, or sheltered lane, and to stand agaze on a great shoulder of the close-cropped hill and look away to the distant misty blue where land and sky seemed to melt together.

Stephen was happy in these little expeditions and in this life of little things; and strangely enough the activity of his friends did not bring home to him disturbing thought of his own idleness. He was never tired of watching them. He contemplated them like an indulgent brother. When he did not see them he thought of them. Had he had time to think of himself, he would have wondered where was that confident youth, who so short a time ago had come whirring from that old Oxford which was too slow for his eagerness. What had become of that quick ambition? As he and Chaloner rode homeward one evening on the hired horses, which had carried them far across the neighbouring downs, he began to speak to his friend about his sisters. "They are so good," he said, "and they don't seem to know it. They are always giving up their country walks and their music and their games for some old woman or some young woman, or for clubs and classes, and they never complain."

"Oh," said their brother, half-attentive, "they like it. Look at the old cathedral tower from here!" And he stopped his horse on the crest of the high down. Then, as they sat and looked, some more tender emotion, which was never far from this newspaper man, filled his eyes with tears. He took off his spectacles and wiped them. "That's good for the girls, too," he said, "the dear old cathedral. They just bundle in

In the Garden

and pray or sit and muse. It does them good ; it keeps them sweet. The Deanery girls are good girls too ; but they do their kindnesses a little from above. There's a taint of patronage. Now our girls are sweet. Even Jin is never sharp with the needy, and Bet is a sort of angel. ' Little Sisters of the Poor ' I call them. Come on ! The light's going out of the world." And he rapped his heel against the old horse's tough side.

About that same hour Betty and her brother Ned were standing together by the old sundial at the bottom of the garden. The boy stood on the highest of the wide stone steps, which upheld the shaft, and his arms were on the dial plate and his cheek laid upon his arms ; and opposite stood his sister with the westerly sunshine on her face, and her finger tips on the dial. They were very much alike, these two, and for looks the sweetest of the Coops. His face was the more freckled, as became the face of a lad, and the girl's more quick with the blush, but clear wholesome morning faces both, eloquent of fair thoughts and fancies virginal. Under the charm of the hour, and after the work and play of the day, Ned was moved to confide some thoughts to his favourite sister, who, he knew, would not laugh at him. After all that, which he did not say, was the most. He did not say that to him their guest seemed a sort of prince from Wonderland, and his abiding with them a glory which had transfigured his home. His genius for hero-worship had clothed the guest of the family with all fine qualities ; but all that he said was, " Isn't it rum for a fellow like him to come and live with us like this ? "

Stephen Calinari

Betty paused a little, looking affectionately at her brother. "You think a lot of him," she said at last; "don't you, Neddy?"

Then there was a longer pause, and then Ned said, "Mat says it's all rot about his being a sort of brother to us. Mat says he's a swell and just finds this a good sort of place to rest in; and that when he's quite fit he'll go back to his own sort of people, and—we shan't see him any more."

"Dear old Mat!" said Bet, musing. "Mat is so prudent. Perhaps he's right; but—Mat's not romantic."

"Romantic!" echoed Ned with great disfavour. "I should hope not."

Betty looked at him, smiling at her own thoughts; and presently the boy said more softly, "But you do think that he likes us more than that, don't you, Bet?"

"I am sure he likes you."

"And you and all of us. I am sure he likes you, Bet. Bet!"

"Yes?"

"I wish he'd marry you, Bet, and then he'd be a real brother to us." His cheek still rested on his arms and he spoke quite simply, naturally; but if he had looked up, he would have wondered at the great wave of colour which rose to his sister's face. There was complete silence for a minute, and then Betty said gravely and with decision—

"You must not say such things. You must not think such things; it's not nice. And besides"—here she found it necessary to pause again; but she hardened

To the Wedding

her heart and went on—"and besides," she said, "what Mat says is true—not that he will not remain a friend; I think he is very true to his friends—but he does belong to a different world, to people who care a great deal for rank and wealth; and there even was or is some Russian Princess or something that Chaloner told mother about. But what is the good of talking such nonsense—only, Neddy, promise me that you will never speak or think like that again. Promise!"

"I promise," said Neddy, standing straight and pouting rather ruefully. "I promise, but I wish——"

"No, never again, Neddy!" and she came round the old stone and put her arm round his neck and kissed him, blushing, on the cheek.

CHAPTER XXXIX

TO THE WEDDING

A LETTER lay by Stephen's plate next morning; and as he held it unopened in his hand and looked at the regular rounded letters of his mother's handwriting, he had a presentiment that these days of rest and refreshment were ended. When the cheerful breakfast was done and the boys had gone away with shining morning faces to their school and the girls each to her immediate task, Stephen stepped out into the garden, leaving his good hostess in conference with her cook, and read his mother's letter as he strolled. There never was a call more gentle and yet it summoned him away. She wrote that Elf's marriage was to be

Stephen Calinari

celebrated in the country and without delay. She wrote of it as if it were of no peculiar interest to her correspondent, and she expressed her hope that he would go to the wedding with her, as if no emotion, beyond that of friend and kinsman, would tend to keep him away. She told him that Grandada to his keen regret would be kept in London by conferences with some eminent financiers, who were coming from foreign parts to arrange with him an important affair which could not be postponed; and that therefore she was the more anxious for the escort of her son. She took it for granted too that he would like to see his old friend and playmate married.

As Stephen folded the letter he told himself that his mother was right. It was time to go. Tender memories came to him in the garden full of springtide of the charming girl, awakening an emotion more sweet than sad. Dear Elf! He hoped with all his heart that she would be happy; he hoped that the bridegroom was worthy of his fate; he thought it likely that she had chosen well. If she had taken him, Stephen, would she have been so wise? He was not sure. He remembered with a slight shock that he had been convinced of her mistake when she refused him. He dropped the letter into the side pocket of his coat and went into the house. If he sighed he smiled also; and he smiled at the diplomacy of the dear mother. He knew well enough that she wanted him home, under her wing, safe; and also that she wished to assure herself that he was cured of his wound and that he could see his cousin married without too keen a pang; he foresaw the deli-

To the Wedding

cate art with which she would observe him on that wedding day. He went to find Mrs. Coop and to give her the message of gratitude for the care of him, which his mother had expressed so well. Mrs. Coop received the message and entrusted to him a verbal message in return; her eyes seemed to twinkle with amusement behind her spectacles; she wrung his hands with manly vigour and bade him come again some day. His other good-byes were soon said, and, when the boys came home in the evening, he had gone. "I told you so," said Mat to Ned with the elder-brother air of improving the occasion.

The wedding of Lady Elfrida was a social event of importance. She had been beyond all dispute the most brilliant girl of the year of her coming-out; and without effort, but rather as by a gift of bountiful nature, each month of her happy life had carried her higher in the eyes of men. Other girls copied her; married women loved her or feared her or both; tongues of those who did not know her wagged daily of her doings and of her destiny. Whom she would marry was a question which never failed to stimulate flagging conversation in ballroom or at dinner party. Consequently when it was settled that she was to be married, and after all most appropriately married, the questions when and where had had their day of interest. When it was announced that the wedding would be at the very beginning of the season, when fashionable folk were all agog and gaping, it was clear that there would be a crowd of privileged spectators; and, though some weaker sisters fell away when they learned that it was

Stephen Calinari

to be in the country, a monstrous special train became a necessity. There were many connections of the bride and almost all presentable, and even more of the bridegroom; and beyond these were a gallant army of those who had sent presents and some of whom, or so giddy gossip averred, were equally unknown to bridegroom and to bride. Elf had the largest generosity; a shoe-buckle was good for an invitation, and she did not care a jot if strangers made free use of her pet name if only she need not hear it.

Thus it fell out that on the fateful day a monstrous train discharged on to the drowsy platform, where Stephen on the day of his rejection had sat kicking gloomy heels and wondering at his fate, a load of fluttering brilliant beings, bonnets and complexions, attended by tall slim men in tight coats and shining hats. The more dowdy and the older men and women were lost in the gay crowd, who poured from the little station into the sunlit silent road, chattering and laughing and looking for the church. The church was near at hand; so down the road they poured, scaring the little birds from the hedgerows and a wonder to the passing waggoner, and so into the churchyard, where a few country folk, mostly women, were gathered to see the show. The country women gazed with dumb amazement at the London ladies who stopped before them, twisting their necks and their gowns and smoothing their feathers, while they awaited the party who were coming in carriages from the house; but most of these bright strangers, practical even in frivolity, hurried straight into the church and occupied the ends of the

To the Wedding

old-fashioned pews which were nearest to the aisle. They would be near enough to the bride to estimate even the quality of her raiment.

These old-fashioned pews were among the trials of the new Vicar, Hector Dilly, who was a young man of zeal superabundant. The wonderful growth in power of the Church during some fifty years has been accompanied by the peculiar vigour of the High Church party, in which have appeared men remarkable for ability, for learning and for force of character. The power of these men with the authority of the Church behind them has been great indeed. Of the disciples who sat at their feet the stronger youth have been worthy of their masters. Accustomed as schoolboys to influence their friends they found their authority sanctified by admission to the priesthood. They had heard confessions from playmates without a thought of the Confessional. Ordination brought them a greater sense of responsibility for a power which was already theirs; they were sobered and strengthened for their task. These were the stronger youth; but there were weaker also, and the young, who have no influence or authority as men, are apt to be intoxicated by the idea of their power as priests. Of these weaker vessels was the Rev. Hector Dilly, at whom Lord Ranmore, who was not responsible for his coming, had raised silent eyebrows and thrust out the under lip of disapproval. Small tradesmen from the neighbouring village with their wives and daughters formed the rather sparse congregation of the Reverend Hector on the Sunday mornings, which the agricultural labourers spent mainly in sleep after

Stephen Calinari

the long days of the week ; but the Reverend Hector never realized whom he was addressing. He varied familiar and futile talk about crops, of which neither he nor his congregation knew much, with unprovoked and fiery attacks on Dissenters, impassioned summons to Confession, and even in moments of excitement with strident assertions of his power to absolve his hearers from their sins. The village grocer heard him with amazement. Indeed Mr. Dilly went to great lengths ; and he cherished a secret hope that he would some day be chastised by his Bishop. And yet his parish was so quiet, so rustic, and so far from the madding crowd, that even a man of exceptional daring might play strange pranks therein with slender hope of martyrdom. To such a man the marriage of Lord Ranmore's daughter came as an excitement and an opportunity. With all or almost all his thoughts concentrated on himself he awaited the day as one far more important to his own career than to that of the mere bridegroom or mere bride. As by a flash of inspiration he saw his immediate duty clear, the duty of saying a few words to this crowd, of course frivolous, on the sanctity of marriage. He had heard of the increasing levity of the London world ; he had read of it in chance numbers of a Society paper, which nothing would have induced him to take in regularly ; it could scarcely be doubted that there was even considerable laxity in the marriage tie. Now he felt it his duty to say a few words—not a sermon, but just a few simple earnest words. He could hardly be misunderstood ; if he were it was no less his duty ; he felt a glow of satisfaction. There

In Church and After

were rumours also, which he waved aside with a motion of his lean red hand, which suffered much from chilblains in the winter weather, of remarkable people who were expected, more than one duke, a cabinet minister if he could tear himself from his public duties, a marquess suspected of great influence in the counsels of great Churchmen at home and abroad. Here was a chance indeed! Even a few words had shown before now of what stuff the speaker was made. What if a phrase should haunt the ear of a man of influence? Preferment? Aye, if preferment meant a greater sphere of influence, a passage to larger duties from this Sleepy Hollow!

In some such course ran the thoughts of this little cleric as the eventful day drew near; and hence it happened that on that peaceful morning an unexpected shock was given to that easy crowd, who had come chattering and gossiping from Babylon.

CHAPTER XL

IN CHURCH AND AFTER

THEY came jingling and rustling into church and filled the old pews like a little murmuring tide. Those who had occupied the seats nearest to the aisle refused to move up before the later comers; there was whispering, protesting, nodding, smiling, some yielding to women of greater social importance, some checking of improper laughter; and so little by little the gay ladies settled into their places. Then from their places

Stephen Calinari

they nodded and smiled and made eyes at acquaintances too far for speech, or fell into confidential talk with people in the pews behind and before. There was a subdued chatter everywhere, as of the first babble of birds in shrubberies at dawn; there were glances of painted and provoking eyes, and frequent restless twistings of the neck expectant of the bride. The whole crowd seemed light and gay; for solid dowdy or elderly relations of both houses were lost among the more brilliant people. There were more women than men and almost no husbands. The husbands were fishing or yachting, in the city or out with their yeomanry. In their room were some elderly bachelors who went everywhere, and more young men who carried the wraps of charming married women. There was Lady Chalmers, who was given to lamentations on the strain of living up to the reputation of being the prettiest woman in London; and Percy Ashe, who was so keen a soldier till Lady Chalmers made him leave the army. There was Mrs. Benyon Fynch and Lord Sothergate, and the girl whom Lord Sothergate would like to marry if Mrs. Benyon Fynch would let him. There was little Mrs. Fox, and of course Sir Anthony Blathewicke, whose wife kept house in Northumberland; and there was the cultivated and majestic Duchess of Buckland who had brought down a young secretary from his embassy that he might learn what an English country church was like. The young duchess already took herself and her mission very seriously; she was untiring in her efforts to improve the minds of good-looking young men. Perhaps no young man looked better than the

In Church and After

bridegroom who stood by the altar rails, tall and straight and pale, supported by his brother and best man, who was as nearly his equal as it is seemly for a best man to be. And then after some commotion at the door came in the bride so fresh and fair and bearing herself with such sweet reasonableness, as she moved up the church with her hand just resting on her father's arm, that even the little tongues of smiling envy were struck dumb. Then the congregation resigned themselves to the ceremony and quiet reigned; and so all went well until at the end of the service they began to realize that the little clergyman was addressing to them words which were not in the Prayer-Book. The sentence, "If there be no sermon declaring the duties of man and wife," had been the temptation of the Reverend Hector; and now, with his skinny neck raised high for a better view, he was giving forth those few words on the duties of man and wife, which he had thought it his duty to prepare. They were sufficiently commonplace, sufficiently free from offence; but the tone and manner were but a poor echo of the tone and manner of a more famous preacher, and had all the weakness of a copy. Moreover it grew more and more clear to his hearers that he was addressing them as if they were there before him in orthodox couples, husband and wife side by side, all paired and ready to be admonished. An uneasy emotion seemed to run through the church. The more emotional of the women had been touched by the service, by the vision of the young bride, by memories of their own wedding days; and now these more tender-hearted beings felt an inclination to cry

Stephen Calinari

low gaiety. Carriages went and came at high speed between the church and the house, setting down guests and returning immediately for more. The more energetic and those more zealous for an appetite walked through the park, until at last, with those who drove and those who walked, the hall and downstairs rooms, the terrace and the lawn were full of people. There was eating and drinking, a feverish hunt among the innumerable presents for the gift of the hunter, a gloating over tiaras and lesser jewels under the cold eye of an ill-disguised detective. The bride, who with her happy air and pleasant manner was the most charming thing in place and hour, withdrew at last from those who thronged about her to dress herself for departure. She left a blank behind her. Then in the shifting motiveless crowd Stephen was aware of Lord Ranmore regarding him with raised eyebrows and protruded under lip and with a slow pathetic smile which seemed to ask for rescue. A very voluble lady was jabbering at Lord Ranmore's patient ear; and Stephen, as he approached them through the other people, stopped suddenly and stared. Surely he recognized the rapid movement of those lips, the jingling of chains, the eyeglasses quivering on their long gold handle. The lady, from whom her host mutely begged deliverance, was Miss Hartup. She was very brilliantly dressed; her colours were the gayest; she gleamed and glanced in her plumage and in the light which she made with her unresting eyeglasses. She turned, all in one piece, as Stephen came to her, and overwhelmed him with her delight, her animation, bubbling over with amazement

In Church and After

and appreciation of his amazement, smiling upon him with teeth and gums and blinking with glad eyes. Was it not wonderful? How came she here? Oh, she was a cousin—not very close, but a cousin—of dear Lord Angus; and the Duchess had insisted on her coming. What Duchess? The dear Duchess of Buckland, who was so taken up with Daria. Why did not he ask after Daria? And the Princess? The Princess had been invited today, but had been too lazy to come—or rather not quite well enough, which was so much more proper. And Lord Ranmore was so kind! And how delightful that he should turn out to be a cousin—no, not her cousin, but his, a cousin of Mr. Stephen Calinari who had been so delightful and so kind to them in the Levant. And now here they all were, all cousins together! Such or of such a kind was the stream which the voluble and mobile lady poured forth upon the two men who now divided her attention; she asked questions and answered them herself without drawing breath; she turned from one to the other. Indeed she was almost intoxicated by the sense of being supremely well dressed from top to toe and among the people whom she classed as the very best.

In one of the rare pauses Stephen assured Miss Hartup that he had not heard that she and the other ladies were in London, and asked for more information about the Princess and about Miss Fane.

“Haven’t you heard that either?” cried Miss Hartup; “haven’t you heard about the opera? Lord Ranmore, just fancy——” She leapt round again to Lord Ranmore, but he had slipped away and vanished.

Stephen Calinari

"Oh!" cried the lady, and then wheeling again upon the younger man, who stood his ground, she went on without a pause. "You haven't heard about the opera? Daria's opera is to be done—performed at once! Not at the Grand Opera; it is not of that genre; it is Opera Comique—oh, but quite of the best sort, of the finest; everybody says that it's perfectly splendid, and the Duchess can talk and think of nothing else. She would not come today—Daria, I mean—because rehearsals are just beginning; and at such a delightful theatre, with such nice people who have been so obliging and who are really received everywhere; and there were other things to be produced, but they were so obliging and everything was put aside for Daria's opera. Dear Daria! Genius must have its way. Genius!" She was obliged to pause for breath, prolonging the last syllable of the word "genius," as if she tasted it, falling into a kind of ecstasy, winking rapidly with her eyes and beginning to look about through the nimble glasses for somebody else on whom she might turn the stream of talk. She could not see Lord Ranmore; she could not see the Duchess; and her attention was called from further search by the reappearance of the bride, who was now ready to go away. "Isn't she too sweet for words?" cried Miss Hartup to the world in general. Elf shook her hand and many other hands, gave an extra pressure for old affection's sake to the hand of her cousin Stephen, and was driven away in a brougham with her proud husband beside her.

And now the time had come for all to go. After the liberal refreshment more people walked to the station

In Lord Ranmore's Library

and all the carriages were busy again. Miss Hartup overflowed with thanks and with expressions of pleasure. She held Stephen's hand hard, as he put her into a carriage. "You come back to town tomorrow? Yes; then you must come to us at once; we are at Webber's, so comfortable and excellent cuisine; we shall all expect you, all!" And the last which Stephen saw of the scintillating lady was a flash of glasses at the window as with emphatic nods she called back to him again the word, "All."

CHAPTER XLI

IN LORD RANMORE'S LIBRARY

"YOU know what Ranmore is," Lady Morby had said a dozen times or more to that one of her most intimate friends whom she tormented most often with the record of her social successes. "You know Ranmore; but even he cannot wholly have forgotten all that I have done for his girls." During the weeks before Elf's wedding she had almost jerked herself into a fever; the coming of each post had made her gasp like a new-landed fish; but not even her black and penetrating eyes could discover among her letters any call from Lord Ranmore more intimate than the bare card of invitation to his daughter's wedding. "Well, all I can say is," she said to that same doleful recipient of her confidences, "all I can say is"—and even that she could not say; the grievance choked her. Indeed the

Stephen Calinari

poor lady had acquired the very finest and largest grievance in her unrivalled collection of grievances. She had counted on playing mother to the bride; she had even let others see that she counted on it; as the day drew near, she had discharged hints less and less equivocal in the direction of the family. She had seen herself with her mind's hungry eye gracefully performing the part of hostess for her widowed cousin, embracing Elf on the top step when everything had gone off beautifully, and turning to the consolation of Lotty in that comfortable house when guests of less importance had gone away. Lord Ranmore, whom she blamed for all, would have yielded to her unspoken prayers; and Lotty, who would have been chief sufferer, even urged the persistent lady's claims. It was cruel Elf, the very bride, who decided Susan Morby's fate with an argument unanswerable.

"She may come to the wedding," Elf had said with an air of the largest generosity; "but she must be removed, by force if necessary, when I am gone. If you don't promise to thrust her forth I will take her with me and Angus."

At this Lord Angus had given a cry of horror without precedent in his history; but Elf had looked on him with rebuke and added gravely—

"That would be much better than leaving her to worry Lotty. Lotty won't know how much she will miss me till I have gone."

On this the bridegroom had turned on his future father-in-law a face of dumb entreaty so comical that he broke into grim laughter and promised that his de-

In Lord Ranmore's Library

voted kinswoman should be sent back to London after the ceremony, even, if he had to call in the local police.

"Elf would have done it," Lord Angus said to him, nodding gravely and with both awe and admiration in his tone.

Even on the very morning of the wedding Lady Morby had not given up all hope. She had risen from her couch as for a dangerous enterprise and arrayed herself in a new gown of a defiant colour; and when she entered the railway carriage, her maid was in a second class compartment and her favourite trunk was in the van. The maid and trunk lay hidden at the little country station, while their commander-in-chief advanced upon the position in which she yet hoped to establish herself. At the first word which could be taken as any sort of invitation she would send for that maid and box. But that word was never spoken; and even in that dauntless breast the last spark of hope was quenched, when peering about and listening with admirable ears she became aware that Madame Calinari, who was barely a connection, had been invited to help Lord Ranmore to receive his guests and to stay for the night, or for as many nights as she would. Madam's maid was not abandoned in a forlorn, if strategically sound, position at a little country station; madam's box, spacious and domed, was planted in that best bedroom which Lady Morby had marked for her own; and all her handsome brushes and bottles were displayed, as if in triumph, on the wide dressing-table. All day the well-known black eyes had sought the face of Lord Ranmore, eloquent of the grievance

Stephen Calinari

which he, inwardly uneasy but with an air of fine placidity, ignored; and, when the bride and bridegroom had gone and the last of the guests were going, he had sought her with calm courage, pressed her long lean fingers, and with the same pressure gently but firmly conveyed her across the threshold of his home. She was the last to enter the last carriage; and as she was driven away she looked out with wild protesting eyes on Madame Calinari standing calm and beneficent beside Lord Ranmore on the steps. She picked up the hungry maid and the unwelcome box and so retreated upon London in the best order possible.

And then how divine a calm settled on that large cool country house when the last of the heated revellers had rattled noisily away! Its owner breathed a sigh as he felt the peace close round him. Susan had gone, the last of the restless people who demanded attention. Only a few quiet folk remained, elderly relations who had come from afar and could not reach home easily before night, country people consonant with country calm. These now seemed to come to the surface, as it were, when the more fashionable tide had ebbed to town. Nature too seemed to give point to the change. The wind moved softly to the south; a hush of expectation breathed on woodland and on quiet pasture, and in due time the moon shone forth in heaven. And punctual as the moon Madame Calinari, unfailing in her courtesy and calm, took charge of the tranquil guests who stayed, or shared their entertainment with Lotty and her father in such proportion as was good for them.

When the evening had passed away with its refresh-

In Lord Ranmore's Library

ing peace and the ladies had taken their candles, Lord Ranmore laid his hand on Stephen's shoulder and with characteristic silence propelled him to the library. The large cool room with its scanty furniture looked dark in the young man's eyes as he entered; but a wood fire had been lately lighted on the hearth, and in a pleasant oasis he saw two deep leathern armchairs drawn near to the flame and a round table which held, besides the shaded lamp, a tray of bottles and tall glasses and a box of cigars. It could not but strike the young man as strange that on the evening of Elf's wedding day he should be led by a firm hand into this room wherein his suit had been as firmly rejected so short a time ago. His spirit rose alert at the recollection; he wondered what the silent man was going to say to him; on his side he felt small inclination to say anything. That struck him as strange; he remembered how full of words he had been on that departed day in that same place. One thing pleased him: he felt sure, though he could not say why, that his companion liked him much better now than then. He was considering this as he sat in the deep chair into which he had been softly pushed; he was considering this and gazing at the three logs crackling on the hearth when to his surprise Lord Ranmore began to talk. He could not have been justly called garrulous, but he talked as much as most men talk when their mouths for long intervals are stopped by their cigars. He talked at his ease, with one stout leg crossed over the other, and he too gazed at the red light on the hearth. He talked of his girls, and most of Elf, but without any reference to, or, as it seemed,

Stephen Calinari

any recollection of, that last interview which had been held on the same subject in the same place and with this same young man.

"I think it will do," he said of Elf's marriage. "He has the right stuff in him. He won't endanger the Thames. He has been frank with me—very frank. He has some things to regret—the usual things. He does regret. He is very anxious to do right. He not only adores but reverences Elf—comical enough! She's a giddy creature; but she's a good girl. My girls are good girls—too good for these people who were here today. But that world will grow worse before it's better. We like to think we get that sort of thing from France—poisonous honey, tigers and monkeys. It'll grow worse before it's better. Elf won't like the talk. They'll say things to her as a married woman. The talk between men and women in society will grow more and more free. That's bad. Women are no good when they lose their modesty. Elf won't like it long. She and her husband will live more and more in the country. He has a very nice place—goes to the second son."

Stephen had never heard so much from the taciturn man; perhaps nobody had ever heard so much from him in so short a time. He addressed it, bit by bit, in the intervals of smoke, to the wood fire, and Stephen made no comment; his thoughts were moving quickly about the world. After a long silence Lord Ranmore shifted himself slightly in his chair and looked at his young cousin. He seemed to consider him attentively, and yet Stephen thought it possible that he was not

In Lord Ranmore's Library

thinking of him at all. At last he spoke, and spoke straight to him.

"I have something to say to you," he said; and then he paused so long that his hearer wondered if he had forgotten what he meant to say. But after a time of silent smoking he laid down the remnant of his cigar and spoke briefly. "Your father wrote me a letter," he said, "on the day before his death. I have carried it about with me. Here it is." He drew out a crumpled note from the inner pocket of his dress-coat and Stephen took it eagerly. It was very short, and in a few minutes Stephen had read and re-read it and looked up with inquiry to his friend. "I know what he did," said Lord Ranmore; "he writes there plainly enough what he means to do. Nobody will ever know it from me."

"I am sure of that," said Stephen.

Lord Ranmore leaned forward, drew the letter from the other's slim fingers and tossed it into the fire.

"Ah!" cried Stephen, jumping up to snatch it from the flame.

"It's better so," said Lord Ranmore, and the young man, half persuaded, sat down again. "You have read it; you have seen his wishes. He wished his life to be forgotten—blotted out. You must not use his name; you must make your adopted name famous. He thought you very clever."

Stephen made an impatient gesture.

"You think little of his judgment," said the other.

"It wasn't that," said Stephen.

"He was clever, brilliantly clever; he could judge

Stephen Calinari

cleverness. What I want to say to you is that I should like to help you—for his sake."

Stephen looked quickly in the other's face; he was burning to hear some good of his father.

"I was his friend," continued Lord Ranmore; "if you had seen him as I saw him first, when we were boys"—he fell into silence, leaving the sentence unfinished, living in a far past; but after a time he shook his shoulders and sat more straight in his chair. "You take to politics," he said; "I will do my best to be of use to you in politics; at the start I may be able to help you. Anyway I will try."

"Give me time," said Stephen. "It seems to me now that I am not ready, that I don't know enough. I am ashamed to think how I talked in London and here in this room; you must have thought me an awful young ass."

"Oh, a young ass! It's all right if he's young. We were all young. Your father was the most brilliant boy in the world. I thought everything of him. I was dull—dull, as I always have been—stuff of a safe small official. I never thought I was worth my salary. He mocked me when we were boys, scoffed at me, as he had a right to scoff; but he was good to me. We were friends. That business of his took the life out of me. The thing I should value most now would be to help his son." He looked almost bashfully at Stephen, who had turned to him a face with so much of the old brilliancy which had won him in his boyhood.

"And I would sooner come to you than to any man in the world," cried Stephen, rising from his chair with

In the Hotel Drawing-Room

quick emotion and with a sudden amazed perception of the truth of his own words. "I can't thank you," he added; "I don't know what to say."

The older man had risen too, and he now laid a hand kindly on the boy's shoulder. "We will never speak of your father again," he said; "that is what he would wish." And he took his bedroom candle and went slowly away to bed.

CHAPTER XLII

IN THE HOTEL DRAWING-ROOM

TO perch in familiar London, as if it were a foreign city, was delightful to Daria. It appealed to her, as in some measure it appealed to the Princess, as it appeals indeed to all who have ever breathed the air of old Bohemia. The London of Daria's childhood lay in her memory all stiff and orderly—a high house in a grim street whence always at the same hour she came forth, a small girl with a twisted tail of hair, accompanied by a governess, whom she had already recognized with secret wonder as less clever than herself; a square garden into which she was admitted, as into an open-air prison, by a key of privilege; a gloomy butler in black, who admitted them returning to the high house; constant dullness and frequent fog. But now to come unexpectedly to London, to come like a Muscovite visitor, was in itself delightful. There was no weight of a house nor of an establishment; they were perching as if in Prague; they walked down familiar

Stephen Calinari

streets, at home and yet like country cousins, gazing unashamed at the contents of shop windows; they went to the theatres as if they were in Paris, with no uneasy responsibility for the British drama. The only theatres which they felt bound to regard seriously were those where musical pieces were given. They had come suddenly at an unexpected call; their descent upon London had an air of adventure. Miss Hartup had telegraphed in the name of the Princess; and they had perched after a quick flight in the best rooms of a dignified hotel, accustomed to receive the telegrams of princesses without a tremor.

It must be confessed that little dignity was added to the best apartments of the dignified hotel by the present occupants. There was a litter of Miss Hartup's band-boxes, of the cigarette-boxes of the Princess, of many objects purchased east and west. There was untidiness without comfort. The handsome furniture, which had been arranged with a stiff precision characteristic of hotels, had not been rearranged with skill, but only pushed about by chance till things looked merely out of place. Sofas and armchairs held what should have been on tables, while the chief ornament of the chief table was a long tumbler, which had held a deep invigorating draught of the Princess. But in this untidy room, amid incongruous articles, a jewel shone—a young queen, a flower which had bloomed in scented air. The meaning of the fullness of life seemed to have come to Daria; it was her hour; she was the central figure. Without effort, as a matter of course, she held the very central spot of the stage. She was the

In the Hotel Drawing-Room

most interesting person of the hour ; and this old London, which had been to her a begrimed city of besotted folk, had become in one happy day the haunt of interesting people, who found her the object of their highest interest. It seemed to this young girl that she had only to ask, even to beckon, and this man or that woman, whom she distinguished by a look, came to her or was brought to her by a quick obsequious messenger.

"I can know any one I like," she had said gloriously on the second morning of their sojourn, and the Princess had blown a cloud with a snort of not unkindly mockery, and Miss Hartup in a twitter had cried out—

"Yes, precious, indeed you can ; but you do sometimes like to know such extraordinary people."

Miss Hartup too was rejoicing in her life, but with a thousand anxieties. Out to luncheon, out to dinner (for the Princess transferred to her all the duties of duenna), calling, and inspecting cards of callers through her fluttering glasses, she could hardly sit quiet for five minutes, so expectant was she at all hours of exciting visitors. "Are they really the right people?" she asked, and rarely received an answer. "Are they really the best people? Are they the people that one really ought to know?" The Princess blew away the problem, magnificently careless ; and Daria answered none of the anxious questions. Many of the visitors were beyond all question. Who was more frequent than the young and enthusiastic Duchess of Buckland, already becoming famous for her solemn interest in literary and artistic persons? If she were not there herself, her carriage was before the door or

Stephen Calinari

her footman in the passage with a note. And Lady Morby too was among the new friends whom Miss Hartup received without a qualm. Lady Morby had felt doubts and jealousies, but had been quick to take the plunge. Not to be in the train of Daria Fane was at the moment to be out of it indeed; and to feel herself out of it was the prevailing terror of Susan Morby.

But there were other callers, whom Daria received with no less cordiality. There was the gentleman from the newspaper, who was so like other gentlemen, but who made no pretence of not being there on business—in pursuit of the paragraph. There was the gentleman connected with the theatre, of whom Miss Hartup could never decide if he were manager or business manager or acting manager or stage manager or assistant stage manager or assistant stage manager's secretary. There was the lady who called about the new gowns, like any other dressmaker, but was understood to be the wife of the younger brother of a cabinet minister. There was the lady photographer and the gentleman who designed the theatrical costumes. All these Miss Hartup received with effervescing politeness, with all her lively jingle of civilities, but yet in a little fever of anxieties. These occupations of the best people were so new; the best people of Miss Hartup's childhood were otherwise engaged or not engaged at all. Questions haunted her. If the Duchess were announced when she was entertaining the assistant stage manager, should she introduce him? The Princess gave her no assistance. The Princess knew no fear. She lay reclined on the largest sofa, which she had dragged awkwardly across

In the Hotel Drawing-Room

the corner of the lightest window, and regarded the passing show, as a Chinese lady of rank, dining leisurely, may look peacefully from the open window at the drama which is enacted for her benefit in the summer garden.

And Daria had no doubts nor troubles. She enjoyed the full flavour of success; she welcomed all who came to her feet—duchess or impresario, musician or young man of fashion, close cropped or long haired. This came for her beauty's sake; that for her art, but all alike for her, for Daria Fane, for the young goddess who had stepped forth into the full sunshine. It seemed as if all conditions had been ready at one happy moment, and the crowning beauty of the time had dawned to the gaze of men triumphant. It seemed as if her face and form had been transfigured by success to something finer than mere clay. A light shone from her. She received compliments of all shades and values; she accepted bouquets of rare flowers. She gave a minute to this admirer and five to that, gracious to all. And all the time she was busy with the many preparations for the production of her opera, which was to be a success as splendid as herself. This work had existed when Stephen met the brilliant young musician on the Bosphorus; but there had been more work on it since they parted, and some critical suggestions, and much encouragement from a great foreign composer; and then the opera had been carried by a trusty hand to a well-known London publisher of music; and finally on one thrilling morning Daria had walked up rather sadly

Stephen Calinari

through a formal garden to the large bare face of a continental hotel, which was all southern aspect, to be met by a letter of entreaties that her work might be taken in hand for immediate production at one of the most successful of the London theatres. Straightway all the world was southern aspect, all the air was vivid with excitement; there was bustle of packing and departure, the descent upon London, the outburst of gossip, the flutter of a thousand paragraphs and the tide of interesting and interested persons rising in the disordered drawing-room where Daria sat enthroned. The work on the opera was followed in London by all the work of bringing it adequately to the footlights; and this too the composer thoroughly enjoyed. Hopes followed fears, fears hopes; but at every level was an atmosphere of excitement which was delightful to Daria. She welcomed consultations; she lavished on leading artists all the resources of her tact; she suggested and criticised costumes and colours; as for rehearsals, even the dullest of them enchanted her. She had always just come from a rehearsal or was just going to one. The Princess had surprised her by the remark that as a young girl she could not run alone in the coulisses—the coulisses of the Princess were a little old-fashioned, a little lurid. But a string of chaperons were always expectant, eager; a dozen fine ladies contended for the privilege of sitting in a dim and chilly box with this amazing damsel. Even the prima donna had so far put aside the consideration of what was due to herself that she seemed only eager to please the other young woman of genius. Of the genius no question was

In the Hotel Drawing-Room

raised. Indeed there is often a touching desire to recognize and welcome genius in the young. At the moment the genius of Daria was the touchstone of culture.

When Stephen, very soon after his return to London, came into the room where Daria held court, he gasped at sight of her. His pulse had quickened as he mounted the stairs; it seemed to stop at the sight of her radiance. As she turned to him, she was like a burst of song triumphant. He was dazed, partly by her exceeding beauty, partly by vivid memory of their last meeting. The carpet swayed a little under his feet; he felt the kiss on his forehead, which he had not felt when he lay in a swoon in the room above the Bosphorus and she had knelt and touched him with her lips. He saw the lips as through a golden haze; then in a moment he was master of himself again, and saw her face clearly, radiant, surprised, mocking a little.

"Are you struck dumb?" she asked, and she shook his hand heartily.

"I think so."

Though he smiled, she knew that his words were true; it gave a finer edge to her joy; his amazement was a better compliment than all the studied phrases of her devoted tenor. She did not even think of their last meeting. The present occupied her wholly—the present and the immediate future, bounded by that first night when she would appear before the curtain, centre of roaring and wreaths. If for a moment her quick thoughts connected the young man before her with a past tragedy, in the same moment she had swept it away; she was enjoying so much; she would think of

Stephen Calinari

nothing but her work. Stephen was not tragic in her eyes, but devoted, and capable of a finer appreciation than these other men who came about her; she welcomed him to her court with smiles. And yet she pouted, saying—

“Of course you sneer.”

“It’s want of breath,” said Stephen, catching at the lighter mood. “You take away my breath. And so,” he added presently, as she stood silently regarding him, “you are to be a famous composer?”

“I am a famous composer!” she said frankly, laughing. “Some day I will be a great composer! And you? You will be a famous statesman?”

“I don’t know.”

“Don’t know!” she echoed with scorn. “But you will go into Parliament now, at once? That’s what I would do if I were a man and not an artist.”

“Perhaps I shall,” said Stephen with indifference. “Grandada spoke to me last night; he is very keen.”

“And you? Are you not keen?”

“I don’t know; I don’t think I am ready; I don’t think I know enough.”

“I did not know you were so hopelessly British,” she cried out; “so cautious, so slow. When the hour has come and gone, you will begin to be ready, you and your statesmanship. Are you ill? Now that I look at you, you are changed.”

“Oh, I’m all right.”

She looked at him critically, frank as a comrade, and then she shook her head.

“Let me introduce you to Mr. Samary,” she said

In the Hotel Drawing-Room

with a quick change of manner. "Mr. Samary is always ready; no grass grows under his feet."

The polite gentleman, who had approached her elbow, bowed with more than usual suavity to the well-dressed young man who had engrossed so much of the fair composer's attention. Mr. Samary had an admirable manner, polite but not obsequious; an admirable hat, which was not too shiny; an admirable beard, which suggested great but not excessive care. He was altogether an admirable facade.

"I owe my chance to Mr. Samary," said Daria.

"The chance is mine," said Mr. Samary, "and mine the debt." He divided a bow between the two young people, and then to Stephen he said: "May I ask if you are a son of Madame Calinari?"

Some access of respect came into his manner when he knew; he felt himself in the presence of money; he mentally booked stalls and boxes to Madame Calinari and to this son, who was so clearly interested.

"Daria!" cried Miss Hartup, descending with a little run upon the group, "Madame Bosanquet has brought your gown; she has come herself. Only fancy!"

"I am overwhelmed," said Daria; and then to Stephen, "Don't go! I shan't be long."

"I am afraid I——"

"Oh, don't think I press you;" and she departed to her dressmaker.

"Isn't she wonderful?" cried Miss Hartup, almost dancing before the youth. "Mr. Samary will tell you what the world of art thinks of her. The papers are

Stephen Calinari

full of her, the excitement—ah! Mr. Samary has been so good,” she added, flashing from one man to the other; “he has put off a dozen things, which he was bound to produce, for Daria’s delightful opera.”

“Oh, my dear lady, my dear lady!” cried the gentleman of the theatres in protest; “you must not say such things. What a character you give me!”

“A delightful character, I am sure,” she cried, smiling on him with all her gums. “Everything must give way to genius!”

“Is it really so good?” asked Stephen of Mr. Samary.

Mr. Samary touched his lips with the points of his fingers. “In its genre, perfection,” he said; “a pure gem of opera comique. What the public will say, I cannot tell; but you will like it.”

There was delicate flattery in the “you,” and on this note he bowed himself towards the door and departed.

“And now tell me about Mr. Samary,” cried Miss Hartup, turning briskly from that gentleman as the door closed softly behind him. “What position has he? Is he received?”

She waited open mouthed for his answer.

“Received?” echoed Stephen vaguely.

“I am so puzzled,” she rattled on. “There really are such extraordinary people; and does one know their women? Ought the Princess to call on Mrs. Samary? Somebody said there is or was a Mrs. Samary. What do you say? Should the Princess call?”

“The Princess does not look like calling,” said Stephen, regarding that recumbent lady.

In Grandada's Study

"Oh, I would go; I leave her cards; I would do anything for Daria. But it is all so puzzling; London is so changed. The Duchess—the Duchess of Buckland, you know—has promised to think it over; she is such an authority and so delightfully earnest. Lady Morby says that London is a mob now, and that one must be prepared to embrace anybody. Such an idea! It is so hard to know who are the right people to know. I do want Daria to know the very best; but it is so hard to know who are the best. It used to be so easy."

"Easy to know who are the best?" asked Stephen, smiling.

"Of course," she said. "Everybody knew in old days who were the best people."

"I thought old-fashioned people left that knowledge to God," he said.

"Oh, how shocking you are! You must stay to luncheon."

"I am sorry I must go," said Stephen; and he went.

CHAPTER XLIII

IN GRANDADA'S STUDY

GRANDADA was in his study. The study was more imposing than Grandada. It was in the massive style, which pleased the little gentleman, who owned it; the butler, more pompous than his master, called it "Libery." It showed bookcases, high and wide, of a warm mahogany, and each bookcase was

Stephen Calinari

crowned by a marble bust of an old Hellenic worthy, severely classical in the early Victorian manner, a bust perhaps of an ancestor of Mr. Calinari. A stamped velvet of dark green colour covered the seats of the chairs and was festooned beside the windows; arm-chairs of the largest size were covered in strong leather. The writing-table was extremely large, bound in brass, and displaying a spacious blotting-book, a gargantuan receptacle for paper and envelopes of every known size, an inkstand like a negro's bath, and almanacs, pen trays and other superfluous articles all of an unusual solidity. Massive was this haunt of the mercurial little gentleman; and a stranger admitted to view it in his absence would have completed the picture by imagining as its central figure a substantial politician with hopes of the Cabinet or a British merchant of the solid florid type, which suggests confidence. It was a room in which to receive ponderous deputations. Grandada was very seldom caught in this apartment. It is doubtful if he had ever taken a book from the frowning book-cases; he had rarely dipped a pen into the colossal inkstand, which was duly filled up by the butler as the ink slowly evaporated.

Mr. Calinari did business in the city. In the city he seemed to be at home; in his own study he seemed an alien, and many sizes too small for the surrounding properties. He was like Jack of the Beanstalk in the giant's parlour, or a small boy in a suit too large for him, almost like a bright-eyed mouse stealing across the thick carpet with quick nervous glances. It was hard to believe that he owned all these ponderous arti-

In Grandada's Study

cles and many other solid things besides, great masses of bonds and shares and title deeds and deeds of mortgage too.

Mr. Calinari was nervous this morning, nervous as the imagined mouse. He moved about lightly through the big pieces of furniture, thinking now of the city with desire, now of the letter which he held open in his hand. It was a letter from the Princess, who so rarely wrote a letter, and it briefly announced that she was coming to see him that morning. Now he had known the Princess of old; he knew that she did not write a letter if she could help it nor go out in the morning without a serious object. His quick mind guessed her object; he foresaw difficulties; he framed arguments as he moved about nimbly, nervously, on his little feet. A heavy-handed knock at the front door made him jump; it seemed but a moment before the high mahogany door of the room was opened wide and the Princess, like a galleon, came sailing in. She was of the right scale for the apartment; she seemed to fill the stage. For a moment she looked about her for her host; then he came skipping from behind the largest armchair, bowing low, with quick phrases of welcome. He skipped back to the same armchair and pushed it vigorously towards her; and she, unclasping the great cloak which enfolded her, dropped it to the floor and sank into the roomy chair with a sigh of large contentment. She filled the chair magnificently; Grandada stood bowing before her like Jack before the ogre's wife. She asked politely after his daughter. "Does she know I am here?" she added.

Stephen Calinari

"No," he said; "she is out. I invented a mission; I thought it better."

The Princess laughed aloud. "You fight me by yourself!" she said.

"Fight! Princess!" He had an air of horror.

"You must sit down where I can see you. I can't have you hopping about me."

Grandada perched on the edge of a big chair opposite. "When we first met," he said, "I did not sit down in your presence."

"Ah, days of youth!" murmured she, as she lighted a cigarette—"ah, ah! Gone like this smoke," and she blew forth a cloud.

"It is still an honour to me to sit in your presence," he said obsequiously.

"Poo—ah!" she answered, blowing smoke; "we grovel before you now; you are so rich."

"Ah!" he cried with a deprecating movement of the hands, wondering if, after all, she wanted to borrow money.

"You will marry again?" she asked with her large dark eyes fixed upon him.

He started and turned pale, smitten in a moment by the new idea that she might propose to him. "Princess!" he stammered.

She shook in her big chair with laughter, as she guessed his thought, and mopped her eyes with a large handkerchief. "No, no. I don't want you," she said; "set your mind at rest. It is about that boy of yours."

"Stephen?"

"Would he be a fit mate for our girl?"

In Grandada's Study

"Fit mate for anybody," cried his affectionate grandfather, leaping, quick as always, from the one idea to the other; "there is nobody whom he might not marry. Look at his connections."

The Princess blew another cloud of smoke which in some way seemed contemptuous.

"You mean," cried Grandada, "that he is connected with these great people through his father, and that his father——"

The Princess growled. "Leave him out of it. I admit the connection, such as it is."

"Such as it is!" echoed Grandada, shocked. "He is connected with the best old families in England."

"There are no old families in England," she said, "but peasant families; the nobles killed each other in their ridiculous Wars of the Roses. Now Daria"—she broke off and resumed her cigarette.

"She is connected with you," he said, bending forward in his chair. "I know what that is; but still people here"—he hesitated as if not knowing how to put it.

"You need not tell me about people here. They think nothing of foreign titles. Even at the hotel they watch the spoons."

"Princess!" he cried out at an idea so shocking. "I only meant," he continued, "that here, where my boy's career will be, his connection will count for more."

"What does connection matter? You speak of career. What career?"

"Political! It is assured. It will be splendid."

Stephen Calinari

"How assured?" she asked with the great eyes upon him.

"I have the offer of a safe seat for him."

"You bought it?" she asked in her matter-of-fact manner.

"Princess!" he cried as if shocked by a profanity. "Here, in England, they are most particular; I have been making inquiries; bribery is impossible; Stephen will not be able to offer even a cup of tea to a voter."

"Do you mean," she said, "that they offer a safe seat to your boy for his beautiful eyes?"

Mr. Calinari glanced at her and glanced away; then he smiled and with engaging frankness said, "I have of course made an offering."

"An offering?"

"I have made a donation to the expenses of the party."

The Princess blew forth a cloud redolent of comprehension; and then she chuckled.

"But you must not think," said Grandada quickly, "that they do not know that the boy is clever—oh clever! And I know it too. I put his foot on the ladder and I shall see him go to the top." He threw up his hands and eyes with a quick gesture.

"He has given no proof yet," said the Princess; "now Daria——" She paused, observant of the little gentleman opposite.

He leaned forward, inquiring, deprecating. There was a pause, and then he asked with great suavity, "Is it very remarkable, this little work of the charming young lady?"

In Grandada's Study

The Princess moved a great arm with a comprehensive gesture. "You hear," she said; "you read; she has made a big splash."

"How much do you pay to have this opera performed?" he asked softly.

The Princess slowly turned her head and looked at him again, Sphinx-like, contemplative.

He was leaning forward with his slender fingers lightly joined before him, apologetic, ingratiating. "What do you pay Samary?"

She only shook her sleek head slowly.

"What do you pay to the syndicate, who are beneath Samary?"

"I never deal with syndicates," she said.

"What do you pay to Symeon, who is beneath the syndicate who are beneath Samary?"

"Symeon," she repeated thoughtfully—"Symeon with a 'y'?"

"I think he has two 'y's' now," said Grandada; "he has social ambitions. Samary is famous for brilliant successes; but after some seasons of brilliant successes, they had to form a syndicate to carry Samary. The syndicate after more brilliant successes could not pay the rent of the theatre. Theatrical syndicates, who cannot pay their rent, go to Symeon. Did you by chance arrange with Symeon?"

"With two 'y's,'" said the Princess, musing. Then she smoked for a minute; and then blowing before her a light cloud she laid aside her half-smoked cigarette, leaned forward in her chair and placed her large firm hands upon her knees. "About this boy of yours?"

Stephen Calinari

she said. "You say that a place will take him as candidate for Parliament, because you pay to the party. Cannot the place refuse him?"

"The place has an open mouth for him," said Grandada. "The place is mad for football; and Stephen will give largely to the football clubs and the recreation grounds and the bazaars and the hospitals and the new church and the proposed chapel of the dissentients. The member, who is about to retire, spent a thousand a year in the place; I have promised that Stephen shall spend two."

"And there is no bribery in England," said she gravely. "So you can put any fool into Parliament by money."

"But Stephen is not a fool," said Grandada.

"No," she said; "I think him clever. But I have known so many clever young men."

"Not so clever as our boy! Wait till you hear his maiden speech in Parliament."

"Heaven forbid!" she said. "I was in that cage once—years ago; I was like a bear behind the bars. But wait you, and not so long, till you hear the opera of Daria!"

He got nimbly to his feet and looked at her like a fencer, considering where he should touch her next. She lay back and laughed aloud. "We are like the genii in the tale," she said; "you boast of your Camaralzaman, I of our Badoura. Let us admit that both are brilliant young people."

"And none the worse," said he, pointing a forefinger at her, "for having some money behind them at the start."

In Grandada's Study

"Oh, for money," said she. "Suppose that your Camaralzaman marries our Badoura, how can I be sure of your money? If you marry again——"

"Never," he cried out sharply.

"Poo—ah!" and she blew a cloud of smoke, and then, "I know that *never*," she said.

"If my boy marries as I wish," said the little gentleman slowly and clearly, "I will settle on him enough to give him ten thousand a year. When I and his mother have gone, he will have everything."

"And how much is that?" asked she with the frankest curiosity.

"I do not know how rich I am."

"Blessed state! And having so golden a youth to dispose of you do not think our girl good enough for him?"

"Princess!" he cried out; "how you do put things!" Then coming a little closer, and childlike in his candour he said, "Dear Princess, I will be frank with you. I should have preferred an alliance more wholly English. I dream of Stephen English to the points of the nails (only their nails are not pointed), with an English park and English riding-breeches."

"And an English wife—I know—with an English handle, Lady Something Calinari."

"Yes," he said.

"Would forty—fifty thousand pounds console you for the loss of the English handle with nothing?"

They looked each other in the eyes for a minute.

"It is always something," he said.

"It is much, if *you* have the investing of it," she

Stephen Calinari

observed, smiling. "I can hand that to you for Daria, if she marry your boy. I think she likes your boy; but of Daria not even I am sure. If she do not like him enough, she will not take him—not with millions."

Mr. Calinari smiled, his incredulity tempered with politeness. "The alliance with you, Princess, would enchant me," he said, bowing.

"Why, you refused me half an hour ago!"

"Princess!"

"I observed," said the Princess, "that you did not believe me, when I said that Daria would not take your boy if she did not love him."

"Princess!" he cried again. He was shocked by the idea thus bluntly put into words, and yet he liked to cry out "Princess" at intervals, like a happy bull-frog in a marsh.

"Believe this at least," said she with emphasis; "you must not let Daria guess that I have offered her to you. She is as clever as the devil and as proud. If she guessed even a part of what I have said——" She blew a cloud of smoke expressive of the end of the whole business. "Poo—ah!"

Mr. Calinari nodded three times quickly in agreement.

"Nor let her hear a word of Symeon, with the two 'y's'! If she heard that absurd story, she would tear out my eyes and the sheets of her opera."

"And Stephen is proud too," cried his grandfather quickly, as if he would allow no point of inferiority in his boy. "I know nothing of his feelings, nor does his mother. If he love the lady, well; if not——"

In Grandada's Study

"If not, you have still a chance of your Lady Something Calinari."

He shrugged his shoulders, laughing; and she laughed too. "There is something which I can tell you," he said, with his head on one side, peering at her.

"What?"

"Your opera will be a success."

"How do you know?"

"I know. The right people have been approached; it will be the right thing to go and to go again. You will not lose your money."

"My money?" she inquired, smiling widely on the little man.

"Princess," said he, "you always liked to get to the bottom of things. You went below Samary; you went below the syndicate that is below Samary; you found Symeon and you thought Symeon was bedrock."

"And is he not?" she asked, contemplating Mr. Calinari with her great eyes gravely.

"Below Symeon you might have found——"

"Whom?"

"Me."

"You?"

"Me." He could not forbear from adding a little chirp of satisfaction.

"You?" she asked again, incredulous.

"Me. When I have a venture in the theatrical line—oh, very, very rarely!—I do it through Symeon."

"Then it is your money which is bringing out our opera?"

Stephen Calinari

He chirped again. "My money and yours," he said.

"You little scamp!" she cried.

"Princess! I could not help telling you. It is delightful to be your partner; and we shall not lose our money, I promise you."

"You little scamp!" she said again. Gazing at him she let her cigarette go out and tossed it into the grate. "Melchior," she said in a different tone, "if I had married you in the old days, we should have gone far, you and I."

He bowed his lowest before her. "But in those days," he said, "Princess, marriage could not even have been mentioned between you and me—not even as a joke."

She laughed and patted him most kindly on the shoulder. "And now you will not take me—not even as a joke!"

"Princess!"

"We must be content to marry the young people to each other." She held out her large shapely hand and he grasped it with nervous fingers, nodding again and again in full agreement.

At Rehearsal

CHAPTER XLIV

AT REHEARSAL

HAD Stephen known that his grandfather and the Princess were discussing an alliance for him, his feet would not have carried him so often to the hotel where Daria and the attendant aunts were staying. But ignorant of any matrimonial negotiations and still possessed by an unnatural idleness the youth slipped back into the habit of attendance to which he had yielded by the great rushing Bosphorus. There he had yielded to a strange charm, but all the time he was eager for action; now he was eager for nothing, and the summons which he expected did not stir his pulses. A member of Parliament, who had served his party for many years, was to be promoted soon to the ease and dignity of the Upper House; and when this event occurred Stephen would be ready to do all which the initiated ordained for him. Then he would have to go down to the place, which would be ready to receive him; then he would have to say all that was expected of him and to call apologetically on innumerable people. It would not be thrilling as a call to battle nor even to the contemplation of battle. The idea of this peaceful campaign slightly bored him; he hoped that his success would please his grandfather. His own indifference amazed him when he thought about it; but he very rarely thought about either the career or his indifference to the career. He was like a gladia-

Stephen Calinari

tor who stopped to yawn at the entrance of the arena. He felt far more interest in the fate of Daria's opera. He was glad to drop in and to hear the latest report of the rehearsals, of the tenor's cold, of the rheumatism of the soprano's mother. He joined the court of Daria; he was content to figure in her train; and, if he ever gave a thought to the number of his visits, he told himself that there were other young men who came as often. Compared with these devoted youths he was an old friend; both the girl and her aunts treated him as an old friend; and he realized with amusement that in the imaginations of these others who listened, those few days above Constantinople appeared as a long acquaintance matured in the changeless leisure of the Eastern world. So he yielded to the charm which had held him by the hurrying waters. He was under the same spell and he yielded himself more passively. He did not criticize her nor his attitude to her. She interested him as nothing else interested him now. He hoped for success for her. Was she really wonderful? Had Chaloner Coop been really right about her? Could she do anything which she wished? Beautiful she was without question, and why not wonderful? It was amusing to be of her party, to be keen for her success, to pass in her crowd, to excite no curiosity nor raise from any one a question as to any success of his own. Thus he slipped back into the old relation with no care about its possible result; he almost felt as if the girl and he had played together as children.

One morning when he came to leave a message at

At Rehearsal

the door of the hotel, he met Daria just coming out. She stopped, smiling, and gave him her well-gloved hand without a word; but Miss Hartup following her pranced at him across the pavement and cried out, laughing as if it were some new and delightful form of joke, that they were just off to the theatre and that he must go with them. He looked at Daria and she nodded, smiling too; and so the three were straightway packed into the hired brougham and rolled away, while Miss Hartup overflowed with vivacious talk which was almost wholly inaudible; and so, as to a lively incoherent accompaniment of triangles or little shaken bells, they arrived in due course at a stage door in a dismal back street. Entering at this door, which was so narrow that it might have been the entrance to a career more puritanical, Stephen followed the ladies along a dark passage and emerged into a theatre, which checked him on the instant by its strangeness. He had never seen a theatre which was not dazzling with lights and with an audience, who, whether they paid or not, did their best to be dazzling too. It had always seemed to him a brilliant, if rather tawdry, exhibition. Now it yawned before him, dim and dusty, a great cavern filled with a subdued light save where a shaft of more brilliant, though dusty, radiance slanted from some chance opening in the gloomy heights and struck on the front of one of the muffled boxes. The theatre was not large among the London houses, but it looked vast in its emptiness; nor was it dirty among the dirty, but yet it looked a very slattern. The stage itself was sufficiently lighted; and on the stage were men and

Stephen Calinari

women with hats on their heads and in the clothes of every day, who in the gayer hours of the place had vied with the footlights in splendour. A few other people sat here and there in the stalls; and some were in motion too, passing in and out as if engaged in some ghostly and formless comedy. The leading artists were at ease; the lesser artists acted ease a little nervously, a little conscious of their attitudes; and those in motion too seemed somehow to be playing at important business. A man hurried in as if the bearer of an important message and looked about him eagerly and then seemed to have nothing to say but How-d'ye-do to a chance neighbour. Mr. Samary stood alone in the entrance to the stalls, silent, motionless, impressive as Napoleon surveying a field of battle. It was this attitude to which in great part was due the confidence of the British public in Mr. Samary. It seemed to proclaim with sufficient dignity that, though theatres might crumble about him, he would be found calm and unruffled among the ruins. Even in the theatre there was a general feeling that things were going right when Mr. Samary stood there surveying them; though it was another and much less tidy man who dashed about on the stage, when a rehearsal was going forward, acting, singing, expostulating, denouncing, capering in his perplexity. Nothing was going forward when Stephen entered in attendance on the ladies; but the entrance of Daria caused a general movement, as if by a stage direction, and Mr. Samary advanced to meet her with an admirable air of respectful welcome. He attended her to the stage box, from

At Rehearsal

which she generally viewed the progress of her opera; and then with a sigh over the great mass of work which he said awaited him in his private room, he bowed himself with dignity away.

"The opening scene of the second act!" cried the stage manager in a voice made raucous by much entreaty and denunciation, and a bustle ensued, some hastily flying from the stage which others as quickly occupied. The players in the orchestra, who had been moodily fingering strings or talking low to each other, sat up in their places as their leader ascended to his perch, and the business of the day was resumed. Daria Fane sat gravely and closely attentive; Stephen regarding her thought that he had never seen her look so simple. At the end of the scene she beckoned to the stage manager, who came running to the front of the box, hot and excited, and nodded again and again in agreement as she made her few comments on the performance. The tenor came to bow before her and ask candidly for criticism, of which he was by no means fond; and the prima donna kissed her hand from the other side of the house and shook her book playfully as if she would imply that she could not tear herself from study. Then the rehearsal was resumed; there were few crises, few repetitions; it was going well.

In one of the pauses of the work a knock was heard at the door of the box, and Stephen opening it saw the good broad face of Chalonier Coop, who pressed his arm and put him aside as he entered to shake hands with the young lady and with Miss Hartup, who had

Stephen Calinari

been making heroic efforts to subdue her accustomed jingling, lest it should offend the sensitive ear of the composer. Now she had a few moments in which she might jingle and chatter to her heart's content, but only a few moments, for her niece stopped her, though no music was in the air, saying that she wished to hear what had brought Chaloner to the theatre. "Have you come to ask me for an interview?" she asked.

"Not today! I give you a holiday. I came to see Samary. He kept me waiting an hour, and then I got nothing out of him."

"You must not abuse Mr. Samary to me."

"Abuse! I am chock-full of envy of the man. If I had half his manner, I'd end as ambassador at Paris. But I am a little tired; it's as if I had been pumping air for hours. The great man sits there in his private room, despatching and receiving telegrams, all about nothing; messengers enter with notes or messages over which he ponders, but the answer is always that he will attend to it later; he makes and postpones appointments. When one is talking one's best he rises and goes to one of these new-fangled telephones in the corner and inquires into it if somebody is there; a little later, when one thinks that one has at last fixed his attention, he goes back to the little machine and asks if the somebody is still there. The stage has got into him so deep that I believe that the whole thing is a performance, that the telephone is a dummy and the messengers supers, the first and second messenger of the drama; it is fine in its way but rather a waste of time to a busy man like me. He kept me waiting an

At Rehearsal

hour and a half, and then he sat pompous as a lion tamer at a restaurant and I could not get the smallest promise from him."

"What promise did you want?" asked Daria, laughing. "I have found him quick to make a promise and to fulfil it too."

"Oh! You!" said Chaloner; "people don't break their promises to you."

"I am sure that Mr. Samary breaks promises to nobody," said Daria.

Coop said nothing; he seemed to be making mental notes of the look of the house; and the lady added presently, "I am so sorry that I can't ask you to luncheon. We do have our hour off, like other British workmen, but today——"

"Today," said Miss Hartup, as her niece paused, "we have promised to lunch with the dear duchess."

"Which duchess is pre-eminently dear?" asked the journalist.

"The Duchess of Buckland," cried the sparkling lady: "Can you ask? And we bring her back with us here; she cannot keep away from Daria's opera; she simply——"

"Lunch with us any other day," said Daria, breaking ruthlessly in.

"Well, I must be fed after a morning with Samary," said Chaloner. "Do you also lunch with the dear duchess?" he asked of Stephen.

"No."

"Then come with me. There's a grill-room handy." He rose to say goodbye, and Daria said to him with

Stephen Calinari

authority, "Remember you are to speak no ill of Mr. Samary."

"I admire him of all things," said Chaloner, "and I envy him beyond all men. With such a shirt-front and nothing behind it, what an impression and what freedom from responsibility! When he got up the second time to address the dummy telephone, I looked carefully and I could see the backs of his studs."

"No? not really?" cried Miss Hartup with a lively leap of curiosity.

"Really and truly," said Chaloner with dramatic intensity, as he shook her quivering glove, and so departed with Stephen.

CHAPTER XLV

IN A GRILL-ROOM

THE grill-room was near at hand and yet the hungry Chaloner was doomed to another check before he saw his good chop at the fire. At the stage door a tall young man was waiting, who suggested hunger far more vividly than the sturdy journalist. He was tall and dark and lean, and his eyes were set deep beneath eyebrows unusually prominent. A thin dark beard, which looked hungry too, did not hide a chin which gave no promise of decision. He greeted Chaloner with a smile which was meant to be ironical; but the sensitive lips, which were plainly visible under the thin moustache, trembled with the effort. "You can't escape me," he said.

In a Grill-Room

"I don't want to; but I'll see you later; I've nothing satisfactory to tell you. Can you come——" He broke off as the young man laughed a dreary laugh, and gave a different end to his question. "Can you come to luncheon?"

"Can't I?" asked the young man with his sensitive lips quivering.

Coop laid hold of him by the arm. "You had no breakfast," he said, stern as a schoolmaster.

"How the devil could I?" asked the other with an air of bravado thin as himself; "this was not a breakfast day; a certain absence of the filthy lucre."

"Oh what a fool you are!" cried Coop with sudden failure of his robust amiability; and he swept him without further words to the grill-room. Stephen followed, and marked the air with which this new acquaintance sank in a heap into his chair, and the wolfish eyes with which he stared at the flesh which hissed before the hot fire. When the chop was set before him, he began to eat with fury; almost the first mouthful gave him colour and vivacity. He ate the large chop and scraped the bone; and then he sat back, breaking bread with his long thin fingers, and putting pieces into his mouth between his sentences. "So you could get nothing out of Samary?" he asked.

"Nothing but words, and few of those," said Chaloner. "He admits nothing and denies nothing; he trots out the usual phrases of managers; and there you are."

The young man laughed with a would-be worldly air. "I am here now," he said, "and, thanks to you,

Stephen Calinari

full up; but where shall I be tomorrow—tomorrow and tomorrow?" and he tugged his long thin moustache out to a single hair. "He doesn't deny," he then cried with a sudden change to fierceness, "that he promised, that he swore to me by all his infernal gods, that he would do my opera."

"You've nothing to show for it," said Chaloner. "I always told you you were a fool not to get it in writing and sealed, and witnessed."

"But he doesn't deny his promise?"

"He doesn't deny it to you, but he would deny it in a court of law. A verbal promise counts for nothing with him. Now all you can do is to wait. He will do the opera some day, not because he promised, but because Zeppenfeld, who tells him what to think about music, really thinks well of your work."

"And much Zeppenfeld knows!" cried the composer. "It is beautiful; that is what it is; and, if I thought that flabby idiot Zeppenfeld could appreciate it, I'd burn it."

"The point is," said Coop with emphasis, "that Samary believes in Zeppenfeld, and you may thank your stars that Zeppenfeld believes in you; and so, if you wait, your opera will be done some day."

"When I'm dead," said the other, throwing back his coat in manner theatrical. "The usual thing: the composer starves to death; then a run of a thousand nights and they crown his bust."

"You haven't got a bust, and you ain't starving—at least you don't look it now."

"If I thought you'd have taunted me with the food

In a Grill-Room

you fling me, I'd not have touched a crumb. Good-bye!" He got to his feet, flaring; but Chaloner was quick as he and caught him by the long lean arm.

"Sit down," he said; and in a lower voice he added, "Don't be an infernal idiot. You can give me a chop, when the opera's out. How's the wife and the boy?"

"Hungry," said the young composer, who had sat down again, and was helping himself to cheese.

"But ain't you paid for the lessons?"

"I gave up giving lessons. Didn't I tell you?"

"No, or I'd have told you that you—— What on earth made you give up teaching?"

"I gave them up the very day the opera was accepted. I rushed round and cursed my pupils and forgave them their arrears."

"Without consulting your wife?"

"She doesn't blame me."

"She wouldn't blame you if you trod on her; and, by George, it's nearly as bad! Can't you get the lessons back?"

"I won't try; it was breaking my heart, destroying my genius——"

"And giving your wife and child a meal."

"Don't!" he cried out in sudden agony.

"Do you really mean what you say about your wife and the boy—that they are——"

"Hungry? Yes. God help me."

"God helps them who help themselves," said Chaloner gruffly; "and you chucked your musical criticisms too?"

"I had to. Going to those concerts was killing me,

Stephen Calinari

draining me of inspiration. I had to go out and say damn in the passage; they scorched my ears." He was obviously vain of rapping out an oath, with the vanity of a little schoolboy, and he went on with more warmth: "You can't understand, a man like you without nerves, without ears, what a martyrdom it is; and there was I on the brink of at least sixty pounds a week, and knowing, as I know, that the public would adore me——"

"Yes, I daresay," said Chaloner grimly. "As you say, I don't understand. Thank heaven I'm not a genius."

"Yes, you may thank heaven," said the composer, rolling his eyes; "it's not all jam to be a genius."

"Your relations and friends don't get the jam anyway. Shall I find your wife, if I go and see her?"

"She is not likely to be out; a temporary separation from her outdoor clothes——" He finished the speech with a fine affected laugh.

Chaloner said nothing; and, "I'll take you home with me," said the man of genius.

"I'd rather see her alone," said Chaloner.

"Well, I suppose I can trust you," said the other with a fatuous laugh.

"Go to the newspaper and see if they'll take you on again," said Chaloner curtly; "it's the least you can do."

To this the musician consented with a fine air of martyrdom; and having now finished his bread and cheese and drained his glass of beer he departed with a comparative air of wellbeing.

Chaloner looked after him with profound disap-

In a Grill-Room

proval. "When I've fed him, I always want to kick him," he said to Stephen, who nodded silently for answer. "If it wasn't for his poor little wife and the kid, I'd let him and his genius rot. She used to make a little, poor little woman, by singing ballads in the suburbs; but he could not bear her singing and he improved it till she couldn't get an engagement anywhere; and she takes everything like a lamb, the babe and all; and this selfish put goes trailing his agonies about and having no end of a time with them, while she sits at home mending, or sneaks out to pawn her bonnet. I must go and see if I can do anything for her now. Make my excuses to the ladies, if they expect me back again."

"What's his name?" asked Stephen as he rose.

"His ridiculous name is 'Lucian Ballard'; but I suspect he was christened 'Tom.'"

"Poor chap!" said Stephen, who seemed to be acquiring a dangerous sympathy with failure. "Is it true that this Samary promised to do the thing?"

"Yes, and they say that it's awfully clever, though you wouldn't think it of our friend, would you?"

"But if it's awfully clever, why didn't Samary do it?"

"Because our friend Miss Fane hove in sight."

"And her work is awfully clever too, I suppose?"

"Can you ask?" said Chaloner; "you know what I think of her and of all her works. But I'm sorry you met Lucian. I didn't mean you to know about this. If he hadn't looked so blue, I wouldn't have asked him to eat with you."

Stephen Calinari

"But why shouldn't I know?"

"Because you may tell her."

"And why shouldn't she know?"

"Because she is generous, impulsive, a noble nature. It's on the cards that she might insist on withdrawing her opera and making them do his."

"That would be only fair, if he was promised first."

"No, no. You don't understand the theatrical world. These promises bind nobody. Nobody but a drivelling idiot would chuck his other means of livelihood, till the curtain had risen on his first night. Our precious Ballard has only himself to thank. There was no written contract, and Samary would be amazed if you blamed him; it's the custom of the trade."

"But still it seems to me that Miss Fane ought to know. It's treating her like a child."

"Let her know, when her opera is out and a brilliant success. Then she can make them do his next."

"I don't like it," said Stephen, "nor will she. Was the only reason for preferring hers that it was even more clever?"

"Oh, there's always the other reason," said Chaloner crossly.

"What other reason?"

"There was no money behind Ballard's opera."

"And behind Miss Fane's?"

"A Russian aunt with a fat purse."

"And the Princess pays for it?"

"Of course, of course," said Chaloner crossly. "What a set of innocents you are! Any one would guess that but you and Miss Fane."

Daria's Discovery

"And Miss Fane does not guess it?" asked Stephen insistent. "Has she no suspicion of it?"

"I tell you, man, that, if she guessed it, she'd be capable of upsetting everything."

"And why not? Anyway I think she ought to have the choice; and I've a great mind to tell her."

By this time they had come out from the grill-room into the street and Chaloner stopped and laid his hand on Stephen's arm. "If you tell her," he said, "I really believe that there will be a bad flare-up. I don't know what she may do or not do about the opera, but I think that she will never forgive you."

"That's as may be," said Stephen.

"Oh, if you don't care," said Chaloner, peering closely into his face with the near-sighted eyes. "I must rush," he added after a minute, "to the Underground, and so to beyond the beyonds where Mrs. Ballard lives; and I'll carry buns to the boy anyway. Goodbye and hold your tongue and it will be the better for you;" and he bustled away.

CHAPTER XLVI

DARIA'S DISCOVERY

STEPHEN did not return to the theatre. He walked the streets irresolute. Now he was trying to form a purpose, now he was wondering if all his old gift of quick decision had gone for good. As he walked he remembered the youth who so short a time ago had shaken off the University and all her ties in a single day, who had made up his mind to take for

Stephen Calinari

himself this good thing or that good thing without doubt or fear, confident as a young soldier of fortune with a baton in his knapsack. He could scarcely believe that that youth, who faced life with his chin up, was he who now plodded the streets hoping to come to a decision and only returning on himself. His thoughts went from himself to her, from her to himself; he wondered at his own irresolution; he wondered if he ought to tell her about Lucian Ballard. On the whole he thought that Chaloner took the thing too seriously, that probably Daria would help the Ballards over the time of waiting, and use her influence at the theatre to secure to Lucian the succession; she would help him with tact, like a good-hearted artist. The question was not really important, and was not worth this walking and wondering, which was but a sign of a new weakness in himself. This he told himself again and again, and he meant to decide this little matter without further debate; and yet in the afternoon of the next day he was still irresolute. He even went to the hotel and was ushered into the familiar room, still doubtful if he would tell the girl or no.

The girl was alone, and this made it more likely that he would tell; but she was clearly ill at ease, and this made it more likely that he would keep his tongue between his teeth. She was moving about the room, restless, and she started when she heard his name.

"I'm glad to see you," she said, before he could speak, "but sorry for you, for I'm in the blues. It's a day of disasters; my tenor's hoarse; the rehearsal dragged; I hated my music."

Daria's Discovery

She had been moving restlessly as she spoke, but now she turned sharply upon him to see the effect of her words.

Her presence seemed to simplify questions for Stephen, and he smiled as he said—

"Don't artists always have those ups and downs, take a disgust to their work and all that?"

"But what if it is bad, really bad, poor, thin, contemptible? Today it sounded in my ears like superfluous superannuated Offenbach, like echoes of others, like—ah!" She broke off with a cry of disgust, walked to one of the windows and opened it wide. "I am stifled," she said; "I thought you had no summer in England."

"We call this a lovely day," he said, "a day of early summer."

"In London it is odious," she said, "and you talk of the weather because you can't say that I am wrong. You know that it is poor stuff, my music."

"I don't say anything," he said, "because I am so ignorant of music. It sounds charming to me."

She stood looking at him, suspicious, pouting. "This Samary and his advisers, his hangers-on, they wouldn't have taken my thing if it were bad? You can tell that, at least. Tell me, tell me!" Her foot beat on the carpet.

"Of course he wouldn't have taken it if it were bad."

"Who was that man with you yesterday?" she asked, coming a step nearer and looking closely at him.

Stephen's heart seemed to stop for a minute. "What man?" he asked.

Stephen Calinari

"The man with you and Chaloner. We were just behind you, going to our luncheon; we passed you in our hansom. I've seen the man before near the stage door; he haunts me; he gives me the creeps; he's a musician; I can tell that by his frontal bones. Who is he?"

Her questions were like pistol-shots.

"I think Chaloner called him Ballard—Lucian Ballard."

"Then I've heard his name too, overheard it in the theatre. He has something to do with the place. What? Why does he hang about the place? Tell me, tell me!"

Stephen felt weak, like a poor witness under cross-examination.

"You know!" she cried almost fiercely. "You know, and you won't tell me. Tell me!"

"I know next to nothing about him," said Stephen, trying even now to decide how much or how little he should tell. "I never heard of him till yesterday."

"And what did you hear yesterday? What has he to do with this theatre?"

"He has an opera which he wanted to have done there."

"It was accepted?"

"I think so."

"Then it was put off for mine. You don't deny it—you can't deny it. You knew it, and you never told me."

She was glaring with passion. He was astounded by her vehemence.

Daria's Discovery

"I only heard it yesterday," he said, like one who soothes a child. "I never even heard of the man till yesterday."

"Always the way, always the way!" she moaned, twisting her hands together as she went restlessly up and down. "Never a chance for me in life but something or somebody thwarts me; and it's you, you who thwart me. I always felt—I always knew that you—— Why wasn't I told?"

"I think you ought to have been told," said Stephen, rather feebly. As he stood by the cold fireplace, with his hat in his hand, he had a full consciousness of the poor part which he played.

"Oh, you!" she cried with fiery scorn; "why have you told me now? You've done mere mischief. And why should I care if my work is preferred to his? Isn't life a battle, a struggle for existence, and devil take the hindmost? If my work is the better——" She broke off and turned short upon him once more. "Why do you look like that? Do you mean that mine is not the better? Then why was it preferred to his? Tell me! Don't stand looking like that, but tell me. Tell me!"

A latent manliness in Stephen rebelled against the contempt, the arrogance of her tone. His doubts passed from him; he was braced to tell her what she demanded so vehemently to know.

"The man is poor," he said, "and I gather that that is a difficulty in these matters. He could not find any money."

"Find any money?" she said more slowly, as if she

Stephen Calinari

could not grasp the meaning; then suddenly and quickly she cried, "Have people found money for me?" and then in an instant, "Good God!" she cried out, "the Princess!"

"But that does not mean," he began, "that your opera is not good, better perhaps——"

She broke in upon his speech with a cry of anger. "Fooled, deceived, treated like a baby! My work a sham, absurd, paid for! Oh!" She had turned white, and her clenched hands shook before her. Her eyes were narrowed like the eyes of a snake, and keen with hatred as they looked on the youth before her. "And you must meddle and mar, you must be the one to tell me, to blast me! From the first you've worried, disturbed, thwarted me, brought me ill luck with your superior sanctimonious airs; and now but for you I never should have known—ah!"

It sounded to Stephen like the snarl of a wild beast. He looked at her amazed, confounded, with his mouth open. Some savage Tartar seemed to look out at him from those narrowed eyes; he half thought that she would strike him. She could not speak for passion, but she made a gesture as if she ordered him away. Then as he went towards the door, she recovered speech.

"I hope I may never see your face again," she cried at him as he went out.

Chaloner's Den

CHAPTER XLVII

CHALONER'S DEN

WHEN Chaloner Coop was not darting about the world or enjoying a brief holiday with his refreshing family, he inhabited in London a large faded room which looked down through two loose windows on the tidal Thames. He loved the old river, which came up so full and fresh to meet the pollutions of man, bringing a breath from the sea and old barges with their deep red sails and mighty steerage oars. And he loved the old room too, in spite of its faded furniture, and the stuffing of the spacious windows with fragments of his newspaper on all but the stillest days. High up in that top story, and above an old paved street which sloped towards the river and led to nothing, he found a soothing calm after a night's work; or, when he had slept at night like other men, he could work there almost in silence at the most busy hours of the busy day. At times the bed maker, dust-pan in hand, drove him to the streets; but then he took a meal or a walk and so did not misuse the time. It was a haven to him, a sleeping place and standing ground in that great restless confused disordered city; and his thoughts had gone back from African sands or the frozen heights of the Balkans to this old room and its reps of faded green almost as often as to his home in the cathedral city. When the bed was made and the bath tilted up in a corner, it was a roomy study

Stephen Calinari

for a working man, with its old-fashioned quiet unbroken by the telephone bell; and when its panes had been cleaned not too long ago it held more light than a room in London can often take into itself. On the ground floor were the rooms of a society, of which the members met so rarely and so noiselessly that Chaloner had a theory that they were a society of ghosts, who studied the members of the new-fangled psychical society. On the first floor the apartments, which may have been stately withdrawing-rooms in the reign of the august Queen Anne, were occupied by a little old lady, who, or so Chaloner averred, dated from the same period, and who was tended by a maid, early Georgian at the latest; and both mistress and maid were quiet as the ghosts below. Respectful of this age and peace Chaloner stole up and down the old oak stairs as noiselessly as they. He never made appointments in his room, but always at the newspaper office or at his Bohemian Club or favourite grill-room; and only two or three of the nearest of his friends knew where the bustling young journalist retired to rest.

Hither came Stephen on the day after Daria's anger and climbed listlessly up the dark staircase to the ancient room; for to Stephen of course had been given the secret of the lair. Chaloner was leaning out of window, happy in the flowing tide which swelled so far below him, and Stephen had to touch his shoulder before he was aware of his coming. He had come to speak of Daria, of the scene which had caused him a night of broken sleep and futile thought. Chaloner

Chaloner's Den

listened with growing regret. He came out of his window, frowning and squaring his shoulders. "Oh, but this can't be," he said at the end of his friend's tale. "You and she? Why—you and she!" He shook his head as if to shake away all follies, and said abruptly, "Go and make it up."

Stephen also shook his head, but slowly, hopelessly.

"Don't blame her too much," said Chaloner, coming nearer and pushing forward the best of his chairs to his friend. "I've seen her like that once or twice. You can't judge her like an ordinary girl; it's a defect of her qualities, the sacred fire gone wrong, an accident of genius, force, passion. I do most stoutly maintain that she is wonderful." He stood squarely before Stephen, looking down on him through the round glasses, which he had mounted on his nose.

Stephen raised his eyebrows moodily. "I don't want to blame her," he said. "I'm sick of blaming people. Who am I that I should be critical? I've been what she said I was, a confident prig, just fit to worry other people, doing nothing myself. I am half-hearted, half-willed, less than half-taught, a poor creature? Blame her? I am all taken up with blaming myself."

"Don't blame yourself either," said Chaloner. "It's a form of self-indulgence. You've had a nasty knock and it has knocked the cocksurety out of you for a bit; but you must get it back or at least most of it. Just get up and take hold again with a good courage; and, as to the girl, a fig for these *amantium iræ*; one knows where they lead to! Get up out of that chair and go

Stephen Calinari ·

straight to her and tell her to put her opera through, and that you mean to marry her on the day after its successful production."

This long speech came in portions with pauses, in which the reclining youth would make no answer; and, when it was ended, he only said with sufficient firmness, "But I don't mean to and I don't wish to. I've never been in love with her. I doubt if I can be in love with anybody, even with myself. I'm a poor creature."

"That I should live to hear Stephen Calinari say that!" was Chaloner's comment, spoken slowly and with emphasis. "A poor creature! Come out and have some food, anyway."

But Stephen did not stir. He looked up with a faint light of humour in his eyes as he said, "I always thought that it was you who were in love with her."

"Me! Have I time for such things? I can only take notes of them with a pencil. Can I tote about a mandoline when I've a perpetual notebook in my fingers? She is simply the most wonderful girl in the world; and it's a mercy I hadn't time to fall in love; for she'd no more look at me than at the least of the stage carpenters."

"Nor at me," said Stephen.

"I am not so sure," said Chaloner. "Look here, my boy," he added presently. "You are sick, and you see things wrong. Go back to the Bosphorus—with your mind's eye, I mean—and regard the youth and the maiden of that day."

"I see a cocksy ass," said Stephen grimly.

Chaloner's Den

"I saw an ideal marriage," said the other. "Oh, I didn't like it at first. I was a bit jealous; but I had to face it. I took myself by the throat and shook myself till I was glad of it. 'Here,' said I, 'are the two most interesting young people, that I have ever seen; and here am I just fit to hurrah at the wedding.' When I left you there, I left you to win her. I was grateful to you and to her; and I hoped you would let me be the friend of both of you, when you were married and were together enlightening the nations."

"Enlightening the nations!" echoed Stephen dolefully.

"In plain terms, you know," said Chaloner, "if you don't go to her, you'll be treating her badly."

"If you had seen me yesterday," said Stephen, "you would hardly put it like that. I was almost kicked into the street."

"I know, I know," said Chaloner impatiently. "It has almost happened to me too. It's nothing; it's a mood. She is sorry already."

"I can't go to her," said Stephen, "and that's flat. If I am uncertain about all other things, I am certain that she and I—it can't even be talked about. It is incredible."

"I shall live to see you married," said Chaloner doggedly.

"Never!" said Stephen; "and it is better so," he added as he got up from the chair and went to the window. His words had helped him to realize that he had come to a conclusion. There might be regret, a sigh for what so nearly might have been; but he knew

Stephen Calinari

that it was better so. Out of the window and in the misty air he could almost see again that beautiful face made ugly by its anger and contempt for him. "I tell you what I wish you would do," he said more naturally and far less gloomily. "I wish *you* would go to her and put this thing to rights, which I bungled. Make her believe in her opera and put it through! She can secure the succession for Ballard. You are a friend of both."

"A friend of Lucian Ballard? Well, I suppose I am, if friendship is consistent with a constant wish to kick your friend. But what am I to say about you? The aunts will ask what's become of you, if she doesn't; anyway Miss Hartup will ask."

"Say that I am canvassing."

At this Chaloner cried out with a new interest, and with amazement that Stephen had not come in crying the news. The old member had resigned and the young candidate had been sent for; and the young candidate had come in dull and dreary as a defeated man. There was only one explanation which seemed adequate to the journalist, and he seized again the view of the young lover in despair after the cruelty of his mistress. This Stephen would not again deny in words, and before that dumb denial the theory of the eager Chaloner crumbled away. He breathed an honest sigh as he relinquished it; and he peered at his friend with fresh misgiving, wondering what had come to him that this first step in a career, which he swore to himself would yet be brilliant, found him even more indifferent than the anger of the most wonderful girl

Chaloner's Den

in the world. He tried to beat the heady drums before the candidate. "By Jove," he cried, "I am glad. You will simply walk in; and when you come back in triumph I'll fill the press with paragraphs about your blushing honours thick upon you. And I'll do them about her too, and the laurels waiting for her head, first woman composer of the age; and if it is not to end with the wedding-march, well—I'll keep that out of the papers, though I itch to put it in. I wish I could go down and canvass with you."

"I wish you could go instead of me."

"Instead of you! Oh, don't let yourself down, old chap." He came and patted his friend on the shoulder with an action like that of a kind old nurse.

"I wish to heaven I could care for it," said Stephen. "I hoped I should care, and when the summons came my heart sank. I hope it will please my grandfather."

"Your grandfather! Hang it, man—please yourself."

"I wish I could. The plain truth is that, if it wasn't for my grandfather and for all which he has done for me, I would put it all off and go back to school."

"Back to Oxford?"

"No," said Stephen, laughing in his old manner. "I should not dare to face the Head. He was right as usual. He saw me as a young fool. Do you remember where we first met, you and I?"

"Am I likely to forget that?" asked Chaloner, beaming on him through his glasses.

"I did not think much of it then," said Stephen, "of those people chucked out in the dismal court; but it

Stephen Calinari

has often come back to me. Since then I have seen wounds and disease and death. And, as you know, one of the tragedies has come very close to me, bone of my bone."

Chaloner pressed his arm for sympathy, and Stephen went on in the same even tone.

"I can't take life as I did; that's the upshot of it. I can't see the world as a running-path where I shall win races. The other day there were some houses condemned at last by the Metropolitan Works; and, when they pulled down one, the next one fell of its own rottenness burying an old woman and a little child. I can't help thinking of things like that—of swarming rooms, of colliery accidents with hundreds of strong men killed, of the Lancashire Cotton Strike with its riots and blood."

"And why in the world shouldn't you think of them?" asked Chaloner in wonder. "Surely they are just the things which a young man going into public life ought to think about."

This seemed undeniable; but nevertheless the candidate showed no conviction. He was silent for a time and then he said, "If it wasn't for my grandfather and for my mother, though she wouldn't care a quarter as much, I'd put it off for a couple of years at least, and read and work and understand."

"Why, you've read a lot about these things."

Stephen shrugged his shoulders. He did not care to continue the discussion. One of the pleasures which had passed from him was the pleasure of talking about himself.

At a Political Meeting

"You go and get in with a whacking majority," said Chaloner comfortably. "The rest will follow."

"I am afraid it's a certainty," said Stephen dolefully. "I go down tonight; and I shall repeat all the phrases issued to candidates by the central office. I join the great army of the uninstructed talkers."

"Oh, rot!" cried Chaloner. "Go you in and win, and, when you are in, you will put the world to rights, as I am confident you can."

CHAPTER XLVIII

AT A POLITICAL MEETING

A WEEK later Chaloner heard, when he entered the office of his newspaper, that Mr. Calinari had sent for him. The message was somewhat curt; but Mr. Coop was not one of those who stand long upon ceremony; and, if he hesitated for a moment, his hesitation ended at once when his Editor drily remarked that Mr. Calinari owned more than half of the paper. Chaloner laughed with ready good humour. "It's my belief there is little he doesn't own," he said; "and, as I can't send half of me, I'll go *in toto*." He went straight to the city, found the office of Mr. Calinari, and passing through a large bare room full of clerks and polished brass, and through a smaller room in which three or four men of more imposing mien sat each at his table, he was ushered into the inmost sanctuary where the little great financier wove his schemes. In the young reporter's eyes the room was not only

Stephen Calinari

little but mean ; the furniture was dim and scanty ; and the London light came duller through a window frosted below by art and above by grime. Yet it was here that the little clever gentleman was most himself and felt most at home. He jumped up to welcome Chaloner with no lack of courtesy and began at once to explain his reason for sending for him, scanning his face the while and considering to what point he could trust him. He was not in the habit of trusting newspaper men too far. He had had a letter from his grandson, which had thrilled him with disquiet.

Stephen seemed to have written this letter that he might prepare his grandfather for his retirement from the contest. His grandfather had read it with quick eyes which caught a page at a glance and then again with slow care ; and finally he had put it into his pocket without showing it to his daughter. Now he handed it to Chaloner Coop and watched him closely as he read it. He saw a look of vexation in the candid face and said quickly, " You do not encourage him in these ideas ? "

" No," said Chaloner, " emphatically not ! "

" Is he mad or is he ill ? I have heard from the agent there that he was doing capitally, speaking well, conciliating, chaffing, as they say—all good. What does it mean ? Do you know ? "

Chaloner told him of Stephen's belief that he needed more preparation, more knowledge of the deeper questions ; but he was interrupted by the sudden anger of the little gentleman, who cried out that he had made everything ready for this ungrateful youth, who was

At a Political Meeting

going to throw it away for a fad. "I know this idea of young men," he cried out passionately: "I have seen it on the Continent; it means socialism, communism, anarchy."

Chaloner was taken aback by this sudden leap. "Oh, it's not so bad as that," he said.

"Don't tell me," said the little gentleman, with fiery eyes. "I know the beginnings of these things; I have seen them in all the countries of Europe; the young men, who should be officials to control, becoming students, dreamers, of the Revolution simply. I have seen it in all the countries, and most in Russia. It is the influence of this Russian girl of the Princess. You know her? Hein?"

"Yes," said Chaloner.

"You know that she too has done the same?"

"Done the same?" echoed Chaloner, puzzled.

"She has withdrawn her opera and insisted on the money of the Princess being used for the production of another opera by a Mr.—Mr.—by one of the base people."

"Mr. Lucian Ballard?" suggested Chaloner, with keen interest.

The suspicions of Mr. Calinari flared up again.

"You did not know that?" he asked.

"No, but I understand it. Mr. Ballard's opera had been accepted and had been postponed for Miss Fane's, and she heard of it, and so——"

"And so she snatches away her opera and without even a word to me who have money in that theatre."

Chaloner laughed.

Stephen Calinari

"I do not see where the laughter comes in," said the other. "But the girl does not matter; the girl will end in Siberia; I do not trouble myself about the girl, if she will let my grandson alone."

Thereupon Chaloner assured the anxious grandfather that Miss Fane had had no part in this proposed retirement of Stephen, if indeed he really meant to retire; and, as he spoke quietly and reasonably, he saw the little gentleman return slowly to a calmer state of mind. Visions of dangerous students, of secret societies, of assassinations in high places passed away from the little champion of order; and he was ready to hope that his grandson might yet be saved from this renunciation, which seemed to the Continental mind of his grandfather the first step to perdition. He had arrived at a full confidence in Chaloner. "Will you go down to Stephen?" he asked.

Chaloner stopped to think and the other watched him eagerly.

"Any sum which you would think an adequate remuneration," he began at last—"for your time and trouble——"

"I'll do it for nothing," said Chaloner, smiling; "I can afford that sacrifice to friendship—if you won't think that socialistic."

"I would rather you went as my agent, in my interest, and with a proper remuneration."

"No; I'll go on my own hook and for both your interests. I am all for his going on with it; I'll spare no pains to shove him through."

For the last time Grandada looked at him with keen

At a Political Meeting

inquiry; and then the transparent honesty of the young man triumphed. Mr. Calinari wrung his hand hard. "Save him for me," he said.

"Oh, we'll save him all right," said Chaloner cheerfully.

Chaloner was less cheerful, when he was once embarked upon his sudden journey of rescue. He had been working hard, and much by night, and, before he caught his afternoon train, he had to find people and to transfer jobs; and so, when he sank back into the corner of his railway carriage, he fell promptly asleep. He awoke with a lucky start at the right station and emerged into a premature dusk and drizzling rain. The streets through which he passed to the hotel looked all alike to him, with houses all alike, built of a grim grey stone. He looked out at them somewhat dismally through the rattling window of his limping fly. More light and animation marked the steps and doors of the hotel, which dated however from the coaching days and had that air of genteel decay and flavour of damp straw which are prevalent in some old-fashioned hostelrys in country towns. An ambassador to the candidate aroused a decorous interest at the bar; and Chaloner learned at once that Stephen had but lately gone forth to a meeting. He kept the fly waiting, while he ate some cold meat and drank a glass of beer; and, leaving his bag in the charge of boots, he continued his pursuit of the candidate. The drive was longer than he had expected, and he was carried from the streets of well-to-do grey houses to baser regions low by the sluggish river. The old horse

Stephen Calinari

came to a pause where yellow light poured into the dusky road from an open doorway; and Chaloner, passing through a little hall, where a couple of men, indifferent to the destinies of the Empire, were loafing and yawning, pushed his way through another door, and found himself at the end of a long schoolroom which had been made ready for the meeting of the evening.

The door had yielded with some resistance, for a party of boys occupied that end of the room, intent, as it seemed, rather on finding in the proceedings an occasion for humour than on increasing their knowledge of public affairs. Before these lads, who preferred to stand, the forms were filled by rows of seated men; and at the further end of the place, where a shallow platform had been raised, were a row of chairs dedicated to the chairman, the candidate, and a few eminent supporters. Oil lamps hung on the bare walls and suffused sufficient light through the dusty air; there was some scuffling of damp feet on the gritty floor and occasional shuffling and pushing of the boys; but most of the people listened well with only an occasional murmur of agreement or growl of dissent, now "Hear, hear!" and now "Oh, oh!"

Stephen was in the middle of a speech, and immediately Chaloner was alert and attentive, forgetful of fatigue. Immediately too he was delighted. How easily the candidate spoke, how well he held himself, how simple and appropriate were the few gestures! He was drawing near to the end of his speech. The experienced journalist would have known that by the

At a Political Meeting

mere tones of the voice, even if the procession of conciliatory and gently optimistic sentences had not proclaimed that the argumentative part of the oration was over and done. Chaloner had heard many speeches; and now he could infer what his friend had said already and foretell the next sentence from that just spoken; but the manner was unusually good, the voice unusually sympathetic; he could feel that the speaker pleased the hearers, charming adherents and taking the sting from the dissent of opponents. He was saying the expected things, making the points suggested to candidates by central authority, but how well he made them, how well he said them! His friend looking on him and enjoying the music of his voice told himself that here was the ideal candidate. It was time for the peroration and the peroration came. It proclaimed the pride and pleasure of being a Briton, one of a chosen race who loving justice and freedom at home had carried freedom and justice to the utmost ends of the world, founding colonies which, the speaker dared to prophesy, would be held by all, as time went on, to be new sources of justice and freedom to subject races, new sources of power to the mother country whom they loved. Chaloner cried a loud "Hear, hear!" while he guessed that this note had been especially recommended to this candidate on account of his foreign name and his rich Hellenic grandfather. And thinking of the grandfather Chaloner was glad to feel sure that his fears were groundless. Here surely was no candidate meditating retreat from the contest, but a candidate doing so well that it seemed a pity that

Stephen Calinari

he had not been entered for a more doubtful seat. The victory was assured and the trumpets might be ordered for the final blare. He could fly back to London by the early train tomorrow, and assure Mr. Calinari that he could count with certainty on the pleasure of paying a considerable income to a devoted and enthusiastic constituency.

CHAPTER XLIX

AN EFFECTIVE SPEAKER

WHILE Chaloner was congratulating himself on the uselessness of his embassy, Stephen sat down with applause of hand and voice. Chaloner was perhaps the loudest in acclaim, but lost at the end of the long room in the throng of shouting youth he was still unnoticed by his friend.

Stephen, when the flow of words was ended, looked a little weary in his chair, and was a little slow in assuming the proper expression of alert attention, when the chairman cheerfully invited the audience to ask questions of the candidate. For a week he had been playing at the game, at first with an interest which surprised him and pleased him too. It seemed as if his doubts were to be banished by work; he was kept at work from morn to night; he was met by smiling faces and fed with hopes of triumph. Even of those who would not promise their votes to him, almost all refused with the kindly grin with which the local Briton welcomes the members of a rival football team. "Let the best man win," was in the air, and no hearts

An Effective Speaker

would be broken by the result of this friendly contest. Stephen had found it almost exciting. He had spoken often and with hearty applause; he had visited workmen in their dinner hour and been met by no missiles worse than clumsy pleasantries; he had been introduced to stout black coated citizens and their wives in parlours behind shops. He had been easy and pleasant, as it was easy and pleasant for him to be; he had won golden opinions and troops of friends. But unluckily with the novelty the interest had rapidly waned. At first it had amused him to find that he had not lost the art of ready speech nor the tricks of the orator; but to make speeches every day, perhaps twice a day, was presently almost more than he could bear; his throat would hardly open to the words. At first he had hoped much from the questions; surely these questions of this or that free man would stimulate his mind; surely one or other would ask a question which would make him think. But he soon found that the questions were seldom to the point, were either the outcome of a vanity which wished to hear its voice uplifted at a public meeting, or, as he suspected, were put into the hands of an oaf by the agent of the other party. His own agent, who dogged him all day long with an air half respectful and half patronising, like the air of a Court official in charge of a prince just come of age, had pointed out to him on the first day that, if he answered all questions at once and with a confident air, it was of no consequence if the answer fitted the question or no. Indeed it did not seem to be of much consequence what he said on any occasion, so long as he was careful not to say

Stephen Calinari

things which might cost him votes. Upon the hill it would be well not to say much about this subject; down by the river that subject should be left severely alone. One must be on one's guard against being drawn; and so questions which smelt of the opponent's central office were best answered with a knowing air and a phrase which might be jest or earnest. To be ambiguous with an expression of profundity seemed to be the chief art of a candidate.

Stephen began almost to hate his little guide, who respectfully stirred him up and led him about, and slipped in decorous suggestions about a word for Mr. Pilcher, or his manner to Mrs. Peach. When the nimble agent came in on him at breakfast, keen and eager for the labour of the day, he had not the smallest suspicion that the candidate, whom he had reported privately as admirable for the purpose, felt a barbarous desire to take him by the throat and shake him.

It was then with a certain weariness that Stephen sat up straight in his chair, when the chairman of this last meeting invited questions. He summoned an alert look; he felt like a terrier who has had a surfeit of rats and responds with an effort to the call. The first questioners were such as he had seen before. A pert young clerk rose with a shy cough, asked a question which aimed at wit, and sat down with a shy giggle when he had received an answer which was no answer at all. A heavy man in a black coat, with a fine gold chain made prominent by his swelling vest, read from a paper in his hand a series of questions which were intended to embarrass the candidate; but in vain was so obvious

An Effective Speaker

a trap laid in the path of our clever bird. A facetious comment, an ambiguous phrase, a personal jest accompanied by a charming apology, and it was not till the next morning that the stout citizen was sure that none of his questions had been answered. A few more diffident questions bubbled up here and there in the room, and then came a pause.

"Has any other gentleman any question to ask the candidate?" inquired the chairman with the encouraging air of a conjuror in charge of a young person who pretends to second sight. Then there slowly rose a man, who looked like an old agricultural labourer. He rose in the middle of the room and stood motionless in his heavy boots, looking towards the platform with eyes which seemed strangely clear and colourless in his large tanned face. One could see that his hair had been sleeked down with care; he had no desire to startle or offend the audience. He stood so long without speaking that some began to laugh, and there was a voice here and there which called to him to speak up, to get on. He looked like a figure of Patience planted there. Then he moistened his dry lips and began to speak, slowly and with a somewhat rustic accent, but with good simple words. He kept his eyes fixed on Stephen with a calm bovine gaze, and it was to him that he spoke. He told him that he was sixty years old, and that he had had twelve children. At this of course there was laughter and some good-tempered cries of encouragement. Three of his children had work and four were dead, but five still remained at home.

Stephen Calinari

Here the chairman held up his hand, and smiling asked if the speaker proposed to end his remarks with a question. "I have no wish to hurry our good friend," he said, with an accent on the "hurry" which earned appreciative laughter. The man drew the back of his hand across his lips and went on to say that he had not tasted beer for over thirty years. At this the laughter swelled to a merry din; but the speaker remained grave, and when the noise was ended added with the same simplicity that he had given up beer that there might be more money for the wife and children, and that for the same reason he had of late years given up tobacco also. And yet he had found it hard to live. He was never out of work and worked all day, but he was not a skilled workman; he had not had learning; his wages were low. He lived in a cottage in the low part, down by the river.

"You may have seen Elizabeth Road?" he said to Stephen, and Stephen nodded for answer. Then came another pause.

"I think I really must ask our friend," said the chairman, "to come to the question."

The speaker turned those grave eyes on the chairman, but it is doubtful if he took in the meaning of his words; he was slowly following his own train of thought. He said that his cottage had been condemned, but that he had nowhere else to go; and that they told him that three of his children had died because the place was bad. His wife was not so strong as she had been. His elder children, who had gone from home, could do nothing to help their parents.

An Effective Speaker

He did not see any end for it but the House. There were murmurs of sympathy in some quarters and murmurs of impatience in others. They could not stay all night hearing a common story. What had all this to do with the questions to be asked of a political candidate? There was some of the irritation of Britons who feel more than they wish to feel. Unpleasant topics seemed likely to appear and to disturb this easy-going and pleasant meeting, which had nearly run its wonted course.

The chairman again suggested a question of some sort.

"It seems hard to me," began the labourer again, but the chairman broke in with a quick—"Yes, yes, my good man, we quite understand that it is hard; but I must ask you, if you have none of the usual questions to ask the candidate—I must ask you——"

Here Stephen leant across to him and said something quickly, and the chairman leaned back in his chair with eyebrows raised and smiling widely on the faces below him.

"Go on, old 'un," cried a voice from the back.

"Ask him a question!" cried another.

"Question, question!" called out several persons, who felt like members of Parliament.

"Can you do anything for us?" asked the speaker of Stephen, slowly, with the same even tone.

Laughter came again at the simplicity of the question, laughter and applause; and then all faces turned towards Stephen, expectant of the quick clever answer which would make them laugh again.

Stephen Calinari

In Stephen's eyes, as he rose, their not unkindly faces looked cruel as spectators at a bear-baiting. He did not know what he was going to say; his glib tongue seemed to stick to his teeth; he stood looking straight into those clear patient eyes. There was a pause, which began to breed discomfort.

"Can you do anything for us?" asked the man again.

"God knows," said Stephen, in a tone so unlike that which the audience expected that a strange emotion ran through the room. Somebody laughed, but nobody echoed the laughter; the discomfort was established. The chairman looked at the candidate with a new curiosity, and the candidate, with an effort, added a few words of sympathy with the last speaker and of thanks to the audience; and on that the people began to get up and go out with a noise of talk and of the scraping of forms upon the dusty floor.

When Stephen, gradually freeing himself from the hands which his agent thought it well for him to shake, found among the congratulatory faces the honest countenance of his friend Coop, he felt a quick pleasure; it was like a bit of reality among phantoms. He made an end of his civilities, shook off his persistent guide, and putting his hand in Chaloner's arm led him smartly up the street toward the hotel. The drizzling rain had drizzled away, and his spirits rose in the open air. He talked a little, and with some humour, of his experiences, while his friend said little, being indeed oppressed by the desire of slumber, yawning as he listened, and content to believe that all was well, and

An Effective Speaker

that he could return to London on the morrow and report the sure success of the candidate. When they reached the hotel he wrung the candidate's hand, congratulated him on his admirable methods and went straight to bed.

Now the bed was comfortable, and the bedroom looked on a quiet lane at the back of the house; and so it came to pass that the journalist, who had been short of sleep for some days past, slept late in the morning, and was awakened by the entrance of his friend, who came in radiant and brought the day.

Stephen seemed more light of heart than he had been for months. He rebuked the unworthy laziness of Mr. Coop, and boasted that he had been up for hours.

"And what do you think I've done?" he asked triumphantly, and, without waiting for an answer, announced that he had found a fit lodging for the labourer who had spoken the night before, and for his family, and that he had given the job of putting the labourer's house to rights to a builder whose acquaintance he had made during his political campaign.

"What? what?" cried Chaloner, sitting up in bed and rubbing his eyes hard. "Why, it's bribery; it will unseat you to a certainty."

"One can't be unseated if one has no seat," said Stephen airily.

"What? what? Good heavens! The builder ought to have told you."

"The builder is on the other side; he is delighted."

"But, Steve, what have you done?" asked Chaloner, whose eyes were now wide open.

Stephen Calinari

"I have retired," said Stephen. "I've telegraphed to the boss in London, and written too. He can send the next man on the list, and he can step into my shoes and so march on to victory."

"They will never forgive you," said Chaloner with conviction.

"Who cares?" said Stephen; "I have not felt so happy for an age. That old boy last night was the last straw. I had been growing sicker and sicker all the week; and, when he was speaking, my phrases about the glory and pride of being a Briton rose in my throat and choked me; and the smell of all the slums of all the prosperous cities of England came into my nose; and I swore to myself that I would not go another step forward till I knew if politics could do anything for a man like that, and, if anything, what they can do. So I am going back to London with you to read books and to think, and you shall introduce me to economists and Trades Union leaders, and to any of your brother journalists who have had time to think of these things. If I went into Parliament now I should wobble like a captive balloon; I should be a Liberty-of-the-subject man on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and a State-interference man on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. The astute politician can work it like that and score every day; but I simply want to understand for my own sake and to decide for myself. Get up and breakfast—I've ordered it—and then to London."

"And to your grandfather! He had an idea that you were shaky and sent me down to keep you straight,

In South Acacia Road

and I've been sleeping like a hog while you went to destruction."

"Poor Grandada!" said Stephen; "he'll think that it was a conspiracy—he is great on conspirators; he has known them in cafés on the Continent. But I'll persuade him that you are no worse than a well-meaning duffer."

As Chaloner washed and dressed himself he recovered his usual spirits. He had not seen Stephen so happy for some time past; that was a real joy to him, and as to Parliament there was time enough. This postponement must be given a good air. As he brushed his hair vigorously, he was composing a paragraph about "indisposition," with a hint of the effects of the fever contracted in brilliant adventure in the Balkans. "Indisposition" was the word—"retirement due to indisposition" was the phrase. That should be put about with promptitude and skill; and even the party wire-pullers would be but half aware of the young candidate's shocking conduct. Stephen's retirement should be but the prelude of the longer leap forward.

CHAPTER L

IN SOUTH ACACIA ROAD

TO the Princess the great renunciation of her niece Daria gave a new, an unexpected pleasure. Daria alone had the power to surprise this Muscovite aunt, who had seen so many of the cities and of the ways of men. All things which happened seemed to

Stephen Calinari

have happened before, like old plays revived with little hope of profit; but Daria could still produce the unexpected. No change of tobacco, no experiment in diet could interest the Princess half so much as observation of this impulsive girl. That the round sum which she had allotted to the production of her niece's opera should help to the footlights the work of a stranger troubled her not a jot. Few people cared so little for money; with enough to buy snuff or tobacco she would have made herself comfortable in a workhouse and found a mild amusement in observation of the other female inmates. But she found a far keener amusement in following the proceedings of Daria. She had seen all the most famous actresses of many years and of many lands; and now she would not change her dinner hour to see the best of them. But at home, wherever the home of the hour might be, she had an artist whom she could view at her ease, and whose next scene she could only guess with diffidence.

Now Daria had made her scenes enough. She had been treated as a child, she said, deceived, paid for, made ridiculous; and therefore had she rated her patient aunt with a liveliness which made visitors to the hotel pause on the stairs. She had whisked away her opera in a moment and left leading lady, treasured tenor and all the crowd of lesser men and women openmouthed with wonder. As for Mr. Samary, he had retired speechless to his private room, where he relieved his feelings by letters and telegrams, by interviews and postponements; he was lost in wonder; only one idea was clear to him—the Princess's money

In South Acacia Road

was not withdrawn. If Ballard's opera was taken up again at once, the Princess would dedicate her money to that production. This Daria had decreed; and this the Princess confirmed. This fact Mr. Samary could grasp and could even explain at unnecessary length to his syndicate; but the attempt to appreciate the motives of these strange ladies made his head whirl. He was inclined to a belief that the Russian lady had conceived an unhappy passion for Mr. Lucian Ballard. He summoned Lucian through the telephone, countermanded the summons, and appealed to other persons who were the least likely to give him efficient help or valuable advice. But at last from the chaos emerged decision, the decision of Daria. The supplanted opera was taken in hand again at once; the amazed artists resumed the parts which they had been studying when Daria and her work intervened. Chorus and orchestra returned to their former studies; and finally it was announced that the theatre would close early and reopen in the autumn with the opera of Mr. Lucian Ballard, which, as the preliminary notices presently affirmed, the public had awaited with unparalleled eagerness.

If the Princess fell in love with Mr. Ballard, when in due course he was presented to her, she concealed her feelings well; the door had barely closed behind him, when with her full rich voice she pronounced him an ass. She blew a cloud of contemptuous smoke in his direction and so whistled him down the wind; but she did not grudge him her money; she was content that it should provide provender for the ass and for his family.

Stephen Calinari

Ballard had come to see the ladies like one who walks on air. His vanity had sprung to heaven in a night and every leaf of the beanstalk spread itself to catch the sun. He did not think it likely that the ladies had fallen in love with him; he preferred to believe that a fellow artist had been so overwhelmed by his supremacy, that she had drawn away her own work with a beautiful modesty and only asked leave to bow in veneration before his genius. No life of any composer, even in Germany, had shown an event like this. He came to the hotel prepared to play the benignant deity and to reassure a rich and fashionable worshipper. In such a mood he entered behind the nimble page-boy, and such the mood which collapsed a minute later under the eyes of Daria Fane. After some convulsive efforts he was quiet as a landed fish, realizing that this splendid young being had not seen nor heard a note of his music and did not give a thought to his genius. She had learned that he had had a promise and she declined to profit by a breach of faith.

"I do not care to gain by another's loss," she said gloomily to him, but speaking less to him than to herself; the phrase haunted her and came to her lips incontinently. He felt that she barely noticed him and that she received his thanks with impatience. She asked with more interest about his wife and child. She even asked if she might go and see them.

He thanked her again; he was grateful. "You will find her such a good little soul," he said with a last effort to recover his superior air.

To this she merely bowed, and he seemed to dwindle

In South Acacia Road

in her presence. He turned to the Princess who smoked serenely, to the back of Miss Hartup who was writing with a scratchy rushing pen and sniffing as she wrote; it was a letter giving details of Daria's extraordinary conduct to the wondering Duchess of Buckland. It was then that the young man of genius said goodbye and took himself away, and that the Princess removing the stopper from her mouth flung the word "ass" with unexpected resonance upon the startled air.

On the next day Daria visited Mrs. Ballard. The house appalled her. The door was opened by a gaping girl in a dirty apron. There was almost no furniture in the room into which the visitor was shown; it was the ante-room to the pawnshop. Poor little Mrs. Ballard tried to receive her as if there was more than one chair on which the visitor could sit, and to talk properly about music and the weather; but her courage failed when she spoke of the baby, whom she could not bear to show in his unworthy raiment. She began to cry, and Daria, like a young queen from Fairyland, adopted her on the spot and the baby. Of course the rent was in arrear; Daria would pay it out of her own pocket. She embraced the helpless pair and went straight to the house agent, who lived hard by. With him she arranged to buy a lease of the Ballard's house. Finding that a lease of the next house for a like term of years was for sale, she arranged that the Princess should buy that. Both houses should be swept and garnished, and the Ballard family removed to the hotel till both were ready; and then, for hotel life had become insufferable, they and the Ballards would return to-

Stephen Calinari

gether and occupy the two houses, living in peace and working hard at music, while Mrs. Ballard took care of their house as well as of her own. With anything of any sort to keep, Mrs. Ballard was an excellent housekeeper. It was, when this plan was made plain before her, that the revolt of Miss Hartup took place.

The Princess received this new chapter of Daria's eccentricities with a nod and a chuckle; the idea amused her; the change might amuse her; she hoped to be moved with as little disturbance as possible. But Miss Hartup, the much-enduring Hartup, revolted. "What?" she cried tragically, "do you mean—do you really mean to take up your abode in South Acacia Road?"

It is impossible to reproduce the horror and contempt which the poor lady expressed in the word "South"; it had the poignant accent of despair. Daria laughed and the Princess began to roll a new cigarette, avoiding the eyes which appealed to her through the quivering gold-rimmed glasses.

"Very well then," said Miss Hartup. The words were few and even commonplace but they intimated the rending of a tie. She might have followed her wilful niece to death; she could not follow her to South Acacia Road. She left the hotel in tears; she went for a few weeks to a friend, a well-connected maiden lady who had a tiny house in a good quarter; but she was much upset; her doctor recommended Homburg and to Homburg she betook herself. Before she left England, she arranged for herself a little tour of autumn visits to country houses, where she would tell her

In South Acacia Road

mournful story. She had a first-rate grievance and she expected to be asked out a great deal on the strength of it. Meanwhile the Princess, prone and ponderous on her sofa, smiled widely as she said often, "The great thing is to be rid of 'Artup."

And so, when the London season was drawing to a close and the votaries of good living, including the rebellious Hartup, were flying to the wholesome waters of Germany, Daria moved her remaining aunt and the Ballard family from the hotel to the two little houses in South Acacia Road. Both houses had been cleaned with a thoroughness unusual in that neighbourhood, cleaned and inspected and pronounced entirely wholesome. But the air of emptiness, which Daria had approved, was still retained. Simplicity was the note. Simplicity appealed to the determined maiden. She came from the second-rate splendours of the hotel with a fine passion for simplicity. She had furnished both houses; but the furniture, solid and severe, was almost as scanty as the former leavings of the pawnbroker. There was a great deal of oilcloth in the passages, which was to be scrubbed with ardour, and a width of stained boards about the inexpensive carpets of the rooms. Little Mrs. Ballard sighed for lost nicknacks, for buried antimacassars; but she had surrendered herself wholly to the will of Daria, whom she regarded as a guardian angel sent to take care of her Lucian. She would have dined on the floor or under the table, had the imperious angel so decreed. With the ponderous splendours of the hotel Daria felt that she abandoned the claims of Society, the come-and-go of idle

Stephen Calinari

people, the innumerable interruptions of life. She thirsted for simplicity, for solitude, for uninterrupted work. In the parlour of the house reserved for herself and her aunt the only movable furniture was a grand piano, a large sofa for the Princess, and a strong plain table with a strong plain chair planted before it. There was a cupboard in the wall, of which the Princess was allowed to keep the key.

"Let us live like the people," Daria said, looking with fervour on her new kingdom. She did her share of sweeping and bed making, instructed by the professional housemaid; she helped the cook who cooked for both houses. She went marketing with Mrs. Ballard and learned the prices of things. She ordained that the food should be the simplest. They dined in one house and the servants in the other (the servants had frankly expressed a preference for dining apart); but the meals were exactly alike, and served on similar dining-room tables of deal, solid and well scrubbed. And Daria went straight to work too, to daily work at the theory and practice of music; and, as she worked or walked the neighbouring streets, she began to extend her hopes more widely. Why should she not raise this dismal neighbourhood by music, as well as by the example of a life devoted to high aims? She fixed her eye on other houses (there seemed many to be let in that neighbourhood) where young women of slender means might live under her control and study music. She began to see herself as the head of a musical college of aspiring girls, perhaps the most interesting figure of her age. After a time she might move

Letter of a Dean's Wife

the whole community to the middle of the East End and provide for Hoxton or Stepney a radiating centre of noble music. She was delighted with her dreams. Her love of sympathy, her love of authority, were both satisfied. She bloomed to even greater beauty on that fairy food.

It was in the parlour dedicated to so severe simplicity that the Princess on one hot afternoon of August awaited Lord Ranmore. Daria was out, the Ballards were in their own house, and the Princess reclined alone. She was comfortably curious. Lord Ranmore had written with old-fashioned politeness to ask if he might call. She had never met him; but with inattentive ear she had sometimes heard Miss Hartup dilate upon him. She had gathered that he was connected with Stephen, and she wondered if he were coming to speak of that vanished youth.

CHAPTER LI

LETTER OF A DEAN'S WIFE

LORD RANMORE was wont to be morose when his conduct was admired; but he was probably conscious of virtue when he came to London on a hot day in August. When he read at breakfast that the Princess would receive him, he groaned over the tea-cup, which sympathetic Lotty made haste to place beside him; but he did not hesitate; he ordered the dog-cart immediately and stoutly faced the day. Madame Calinari had appealed to him; and it was partly for her

Stephen Calinari

sake but more for the sake of her son that he now started on his embassy. It had been a trying time for Madam. Grandada had danced and fretted over his grandson's retirement from the well-chosen constituency. To throw away chances was the unintelligible sin in the eyes of the little financier. "Where should I be if I had not seen and seized every opportunity?" he would ask with eyes of fire. He suspected illness in the boy, even madness. He was ready to lavish extravagant fees on experts, as if Stephen's folly might be cut out of him with the knife. But most of all the red spectre alarmed him. His nimble mind flew about the cities of Europe; vividly he remembered 1848, through which year of revolutions he had steered his own little barque, then really not so large, with admirable skill and a single eye to his own advancement. That his own grandson should be blind to all which made for his success! Whither might not a youth, who calmly put aside such a chance, be drifting? That way lay socialisms, communisms, anarchisms, and as their complement Siberias or deaths on howling barricades. Mr. Calinari was in a tremendous fuss; his faithful valet was alarmed for his health; his doctor was uneasy till he had despatched him with the faithful valet to the healing waters of Homburg.

Stephen had laughed at his grandfather's fears, had thanked him much and even petted him a little; but he had not wholly banished the fears, so old and deep was the financier's distrust of clever young men who did not care to push their fortune in the world.

Letter of a Dean's Wife

Stephen would have denied that he had lost the wish to push his fortune. Only his own fortune had come to mean so much more than money in his pocket or a riband across his stomach. His self was expanding so quickly that it could only be satisfied by a success which was a success for others also. To be Prime Minister seemed still a thing desirable; but to be a Prime Minister who left the world no better, nay, even perhaps worse, seemed a ghastly mockery of success. Bowing, grimacing, filling the expected liveries, Cabinet Ministers passed before his mind's eye, vain phantoms as Macbeth's vision of kings. Stephen put all such visions aside, postponed them for a fitter time and went to work with a new cheerfulness, which he recognized with relief. He had feared that the elasticity of youth was gone for ever. He made no conspicuous revolution in his life. He continued to occupy his bedroom in the mansion of his grandfather; but he took two quiet rooms near the den of Chaloner and there he worked, gathering about him books and pamphlets, reading and making notes, talking and forcing Chaloner to talk, all his study turning always to the question how far legislation could mitigate, if it could mitigate at all, the shocking troubles of the poor. If Government could really do no more than keep the peace and charge a bouncing fee for mere policeman's work, he would seek some other means of helping the unfortunate. No personal success, which did not include such help, seemed worth a struggle. In pursuit of knowledge he made Chaloner take him to meetings and debates of other young men, men fresh from the

Stephen Calinari

Universities or coming to the front among the working men. He heard sense and nonsense, sound debate and windy rhetoric; and, if the hour of ending was late, he slept at his new rooms. He liked the life; he recovered tone and health; he was at work like a quiet student, as he had never worked before—reading, thinking, steadily filling his notebooks. There were rare holidays too, when Chaloner found time to run home for a day or two and his friend went with him. They came suddenly, unexpectedly, as pleasant things so often come, for Chaloner could rarely be sure before the day; and the two fled like truant boys to the country, and Mrs. Coop received them both as naturally as if they were both her sons. That quiet peaceful busy life seemed to Stephen the fit complement of his London studies. The boys showed open pleasure at his coming. Even the more stern Mat laid caution aside; and when their friend treated them to rides, a form of manly pleasure which slender pockets had made rare indeed, Mat looked on him with a doglike trust almost as tender as Neddy's. Stephen showed them tricks of horsemanship which he had learned as a boy in Vienna; and they thought him wonderful and forgave him his comparative ignorance of cricket and football. They galloped after him over the healthy upland downs and felt that they would follow him to death if he bade them charge the foe. When he came to see the school cricket matches, they longed the more to acquit themselves with credit in his eyes. The daughters of the house showed, as was meet, a less open pleasure in this brother's friend. They went

Letter of a Dean's Wife

about their work as if he were not there, or so it seemed. During the first flying visits Betty was away from home, and when she had returned and Chaloner in due course brought his friend again, there seemed a shadow of reserve in her. Perhaps she had a nervous fear of some unspoken thought of brother Ned. But if there were a shadow, however light, upon that sunny nature, it passed lightly away, and Stephen fell into his place again as member of a kindly family.

At last there came a longer visit from Stephen; and when Chaloner was called back to London, his friend stayed. The summer, after all the hesitations of the English summer, had settled down at last with all its charm of tempered warmth and rest. It was far more pleasant in and about the cathedral city than in the breathless London streets; and Stephen had found among the Coop books an old volume, which touched his studies and excused his dallying there. And it was then that the Dean's wife after some careful study of her conscience sat down to write to Madame Calinari. She had been on Madam's list and had even journeyed to London more than once to convey one of her girls to the famous parties, now blaming herself for worldliness, now murmuring to herself of giving her girls such advantages as she had enjoyed. Then she had been erased at some epoch of gentle but firm erasures from Madam Cally's list; and now her conscience troubled her indeed, lest there should be malice in her motive. She was not sure that she did not wish a little to give Madam, what her stalwart son Hal would call a "nasty one"; but she hoped that her main

Stephen Calinari

motive was to play the part of a true friend. Could she see Madam's only son, presumptive heir of such great wealth, ensnared by a family whom Madam would not care to acknowledge even as acquaintances? She wrote quickly and posted the letter with her own hand before she had time to repent. She was almost certain that she meant well; but she did not tell the Dean what she had done. The arrival of the letter was a shock to Madame Calinari.

When Grandada and the valet had departed at express speed for Homburg, Madam with a sigh and a smile had taken her devoted maid and gone off calmly no further than to Eastbourne. There in charming rooms, which she knew, she surveyed her familiar work and books and photographs, all doubtless better also for the change of air. Duly she heard of her father's welfare at Homburg, where many friends surrounded him and dined with him, and among them no one more sprightly or more dazzling than "a nice Miss Hartup who seems to know everybody." Madame Calinari sank into a sweet placidity, musing, reading, taking gentle exercise with her maid, more friend than servant, on the shady side of streets; and there this calm was shattered, or at least she felt that the calm ought to be shattered, by the rather incoherent letter of the Dean's wife. What should she do? This new anxiety must be hidden from Grandada, who was already so anxious about his grandson. It would certainly disagree with the waters. It was a happy thought to appeal to Lord Ranmore. She wrote to him with her clear firm hand, with all her fair placidity

The Right Way

manifest in her face, that she was in the greatest anxiety. She wrote of "agony" with no intention of deceit. She implored Lord Ranmore to see the Princess and to see if Miss Fane would not call Stephen back. There had been some quarrel she believed, a mere lovers' quarrel she would hope. Grandada was content with the prospect of that alliance, but he would never consent to this marriage with a girl of whom nobody had ever heard. She wrote the letter and sent it in her maid's hand to the post, and with a sigh she sank back in her easy chair, and drew to her again her prey of needlework. She looked an embodiment of comfort and repose.

CHAPTER LII

THE RIGHT WAY

LORD RANMORE presented himself before the Princess with an old-fashioned politeness, but she made haste to set him at his ease. There was the chair and he sat down on it, looking about him with a mild surprise at the clean bareness of the room. It did not look like the bower of a possible heiress; but he remembered that Stephen, if he did not offend his grandfather, would have at least enough for two. He sat silent, till the eyes of the Princess slowly filled with a humorous surprise. She smoked and waited; and presently after some thrustings of the under lip and unintelligible murmurs he came abruptly to the point.

Stephen Calinari

He had come from Madame Calinari, who was anxious about her boy, especially anxious to know if he had hopes of an alliance, of which something had been said. He raised his eyebrows and contemplated the Princess, who blew some accurate rings of smoke in lieu of answer. Indeed it was a strangely inarticulate interview. "Humph!" said he; and "Poo—ah!" she seemed to answer, blowing forth a cloud. He did not like women smoking; he declined with a slight bow her invitation to smoke too. In spite of paucity of words he seemed to gather that the Princess could not answer for the feelings of her niece.

"If she does not make up her mind," he said moodily, "she'll lose him. There is another girl."

The Princess moved on her sofa like a seal and contemplated the ambassador.

"Frankly," he said, "we prefer your young lady. The connection——" and here he paused, regardant.

"Poo—ah!"

"We know about the Fanes."

"You are very good."

"Humph!"

Then the lady took the cigarette from her full lips and said slowly, "Daria is a strange girl; she is only half Fane, only half English, as you know."

"We should prefer her all English," he said.

"Ah!" and she popped the cigarette in again.

"We have heard something of whims and fancies," he said presently.

"Your boy also has exhibited whims and fancies," observed the Princess, smiling.

The Right Way

"One grows older soon enough," said he gruffly.

She heaved a tremendous sigh and nodded her sleek head. She saw his eyes moving about the room.

"Yes," she said; "this also is a whim. We are for simplicity, for living like the people and with the people, for devotion to music and civilizing by music. All this is un-English and un-Fane, of the other side, of our romantic Russia."

"By Jove!" he exclaimed in a deep low tone, with his eyes wide open, staring.

"Eh?"

"Madame Ratsky!"

The Princess began to laugh with rich enjoyment.

"I knew you when you first came in," she said; "but you were not a Milord in Berlin."

"I was a young cub attached for a time to the Embassy at Berlin to learn manners."

"You were an odious boy."

"Humph!"

"You mean that I too was odious?"

"One does not say such things," he said with a bow; "you were very beautiful."

"But yet it was you, odious boy, who called me 'The Russian Spy.' You see what a memory I have. Much water has gone under the bridges since then."

"And you married again?" he asked, with a gesture of apology.

"Yes. I see what you would know. I am a real Princess. You may ask at the Russian Embassy."

"My dear lady," he grumbled in protest. His eyes

Stephen Calinari

travelled round the little parlour again and his eyebrows rose in wonder. "Do you go in for these whims too?" he asked.

"It is not like Madame Ratsky, eh? They amuse me, the whims, and my niece amuses me more than all. I accept the simplicity; I live like the people, with a tiny difference." She rolled from the couch to her feet, crossed the floor to the cupboard in the wall, opened its door and displayed to the eyes of her visitor two earthenware pots of 'foie gras' and about a dozen bottles of good Berncastel wine. "Let me offer you something," she said; "the Terrines come to me straight from Strasburg."

Lord Ranmore declined food.

"You are afraid," she said, "of the Ratsky's bread and salt; you think I might poison you; but you are long since forgiven."

"What for?" he growled.

"For not loving me. At that time it was a criminal offence to remain indifferent to me." She laughed aloud, and the sofa heaved as she sank again upon it. "And now," she went on, "be as frank as you once were odious. Your memory of me makes you less eager for my niece as wife of your boy?"

"Humph!"

"You are right."

"Ugh!"

"Daria is clever, handsome, interesting; but she is of our blood, Slavonic more and more, a little mystical, a little intriguing, like the Russian spy, enormously—how do you say it?—ego—absorbed by her

The Right Way

ego—egotistical. Artist, empress, what you will, but not the wife for an English man of affairs. You speak of whims as if they would pass with youth, but that is not certain with us Russians. We are absurdly sentimental. To help Servia young men abandoned pleasure and profit and gave their lives for a people because they were, in some sort, of the same race. Young men and women, reared in large houses and all luxuries, have gone to live as peasants with peasants in our dreary dusty villages. You English, who are practical before all, have no idea how far our romance will go; you do not like ideas. Even I do not know how far Daria will go; I watch and wait; it is the one interest left to me. One thing I do know—she is not the wife for your boy. In this I speak the truth.”

It is hard to express in written words the magnificent candour of the last sentence.

Lord Ranmore looked at her thoughtfully. “I am to understand then,” he said, “that the young lady’s feelings are not seriously affected?”

The Princess blew forth smoke as if it were the sad remains of love, and then she spoke: “If she care for this handsome youth, it is but little. She may think it much; she may wish to think it much. If she feel some melancholy, she will enjoy it; she will watch with emotion her own beautiful melancholy. If she can believe in her passion, it will be something more to give up for art, for song, for the people. For me I know that she has never loved yet. I know. In this also I speak the truth.” She had spoken at unusual length, and she now set to work on the manipulation of

Stephen Calinari

a new cigarette with an absorbed air which suggested to her visitor that she had passed to matters more important.

He had risen to his feet and had just picked up his hat from the floor when the street door shut with a bang, and quick feet and laughing voices were heard on the stairs. Then the door was flung open and Daria, flushed and brilliant, appeared on the threshold with the Ballards' little son riding proudly on her back. When she saw the visitor she stood at gaze like a deer. For a moment she wondered; then she knew with a flush of joy what a good appearance this was. Then with a fine free movement she set down the child, who laid hold of her gown, peeping at the stranger and lisping inarticulate in his soft baby language.

"This is my niece," said the Princess, watching Lord Ranmore with curiosity—"my niece and the Ballard baby."

Lord Ranmore bowed, but Daria held out her hand. "I can guess who you are," she said—"Lord Ranmore; I have heard of you."

"From my cousin Stephen," he suggested. He stood squarely and stared at her, forgetting his manners, amazed at her beauty, and at the something beyond mere beauty which seemed to separate her from other young women, a largeness, a generosity, a possibility of greatness which he inferred but knew not why. She might have many weaknesses, but she was of those apart. He stood looking gloomily at her; such chances were a great deal to renounce; risk there might be, but what boundless hopes! He thought that if he were

The Right Way

young—but with that thought came memory of his own stolid youth, and he knew that he would never have faced the risks. He shook his head as he remembered, and Daria laughed, for he seemed to be shaking his head at her in disapproval.

“Will you make my apologies to your cousin Stephen?” she asked, still smiling. “I was very rude to him at our last meeting.”

“Shall I tell him to come for pardon?” The words were out of his mouth almost before he knew, and certainly before he had realized all that they might mean. He gave a great sigh of relief when she shook her head. She laughed again, for she seemed to be returning his head-shake of disapproval; but she was grave as she looked him in the eyes, saying, “I can’t have visitors now. I have much to do and more to plan. Tell him that I am sorry for my roughness and very, very glad that he told me of that opera. Tell him too that I have found the right way.” She stood, brilliant, confident, looking with clear eyes at the face which was bowed a little before her. For a minute he could make no answer at all, and then it was no more than a grunt; but he pressed her hand as he said goodbye.

Then the Princess pressed his hand, and so the ambassador departed.

Lord Ranmore might have hoped that the failure of his mission would have returned him straight to his country home, to peace and to the contemplation of his flocks and herds. But even on the next morning, while he was brushing his hair and placidly inhaling the clean temperate air at the open window of his bedroom,

Stephen Calinari

the discreet knock of his man sounded on his door, announcing the arrival of a telegram.

Madam so rarely telegraphed; she was so rarely in a hurry; but indeed the occasion demanded a show of haste. A second letter had disturbed her tranquillity, a letter from Stephen himself, a letter announcing his engagement. The letter was charming, soothing, considerate, full of affection; but there was no misreading the exciting news; he was going to marry Betty Coop. The mere look of the name shocked Madame Calinari; if he had written "Bet Coop," it would have been a greater shock; it might almost have seemed that he sought a Chinese bride. Madam recognized the propriety, the necessity of a shock. She must not go on sitting at Eastbourne like a cat in the sun. She must be up and doing. So with great calmness she gave orders that her faithful woman should pack, and she composed and despatched the telegram which made poor Lord Ranmore, brushing his hair in peace, groan aloud in the presence of his butler.

Madam had read her letters in bed, and she had given her orders and sent her telegram before she rose with frequent sighs and made herself ready for her journey. Her landlord was so deeply grieved by her departure that she asked him to keep the rooms for her until she should be able to decide if she could return. She complimented him on the apartment when she paid her bill, and smiled placidly as she said Goodbye; but she remembered as she was borne smoothly to London in a first-class carriage reserved for herself and her maid, that she was, so to speak, rushing wildly

The Right Way

to save her only son. From the station she drove straight to her father's house, and it was in her father's study, amid large pieces of furniture muffled formless in sheets, that she received Lord Ranmore. He, prudent man, had brought on this day a portmanteau, and when she asked his escort to the cathedral city he was able to agree. Grandada must be left at Homburg, and no hint of this catastrophe must mar his cure. In his absence to whom could she turn but to Lord Ranmore? Such questions as these he answered with a bow and some indeterminate grumbling. "Is Stephen staying in their house?" were his first articulate words.

She feared that he was; but she suggested that they might go to the hotel and send a note asking him to come to them there.

At that he grunted, raising his eyebrows and thinking.

"We had better go to their house," he said; "you need not know of any engagement; you can thank Mrs. Coop for her kindness to your son. You see her, you see her house, perhaps you see the girl. All that is to the good. Eh?"

"I put myself entirely in your hands," she said with a sweet reasonableness.

Stephen Calinari

CHAPTER LIII

IN THE CATHEDRAL CITY

MEANWHILE in the cathedral city the tremulous conscience of the Dean's wife was the cause of palpitations. Her heart fluttered as she opened Madame Calinari's letter, which thanked her very politely but formally for her warning. She was sitting with this letter in her hand, dismally conscious of the vanity of life and of a good connection, when her stalwart husband came into the room; and on a sudden impulse she gave the letter to him and confessed what she herself had written. The Dean read the letter with pursed lips. "You'll get no thanks from any one," he said, as he dropped it on her lap; and he presently added, "I doubt if you deserve any."

Then she began to say to him, as she had been saying to herself, that for friendship's sake she could not keep silence when she saw this young man of brilliant prospects about to be swallowed by a voracious family.

"A good family, a good family!" said the Dean sturdily. "I have always said so—quite good enough for the grandson of a Levantine financier."

"Oh, of course I see that side," said his wife, recovering some cheerfulness. "I am sure it is not a connection I should care for for one of my girls."

"Ah!" said the Dean, "you are sure of that, are you?" and he laughed robustly and tapped his wife's long cheek with a friendly forefinger. At this mo-

In the Cathedral City

ment their son Hal burst upon his parents with anxiety in his open countenance. Hal had reached home only the night before, having completed his aquatic contests for that year and bearing new cups and honours to his admiring family; and he had just heard in the street the momentous news of his friend. "I say—is it true," he asked, "this about Steve?"

"I'll leave you to discuss that with your mother," said the Dean, pressing his son's stalwart arm with approval and favouring him also, as he passed, with an action of the eye, which in a less exalted dignitary might have passed for a wink.

"Steve always got into mischief if I didn't look after him," said Hal; "he wants squelching. I'll go round and tell him it's all rot."

His mother doubted the wisdom of further interference and might have discussed it at length; but her son tapped her cheek with a gesture absurdly like his father's, and departed with cheerful confidence to the house of the Coops. At the door he asked for Mr. Calinari; but the elderly maid, who had made it a rule to take all visitors to her mistress, whether they asked for her or not, ushered him without a word into the room where Mrs. Coop was sitting. The boys had just come in and were standing by their mother; and the three pair of unexpected eyes turned upon him made the young aquatic giant pause shyly on the threshold. He suddenly wished that he had not come.

The motherly lady said some words of welcome, which put him more at his ease and brought him to her with his large hand, broadened by the oar, out-

Stephen Calinari

stretched before him; but, as she placed her little plump hand in the big palm, he was conscious of a light of humour in her eyes, which made him stumble awkwardly into vague statement of his frequent absences from home, which might be taken as an apology for the rarity of his visits.

"Oh, we follow you," she said pleasantly, "through all your exploits. I think these boys could give a list of your victories on the river, with the times and number of lengths. Is that the phrase or am I disgracing myself in the ears of my sons?"

On this shyness came back to him, and he wished that he had remembered that he had had next to no practice in calling on women; he wondered if this woman was laughing at him. It was a relief to turn to the boys, who had been gazing at him with a simple admiration and awe, which no fellow could fail to understand.

"What capital boys!" he said to himself, as he shook hands gravely with them, casting his eye more carefully over Mat, in whom he detected a possible Two in a future University boat.

The young enthusiasts for athletic prowess kindled under his glance and even ventured a timid question or two about his last race; and then, after a little talk about the boys' holidays and how they used them, Mrs. Coop recalled her visitor to his mission by suggesting that he wished to see Stephen. To the relief of the ambassador, Stephen was out; and Hal shook the three hands with a new cordiality, murmuring that his friend's absence was of no consequence, that Mrs. Coop

In the Cathedral City

was very kind and that he would come again if he might. He was like a big schoolboy; and the two younger boys with diminished awe hustled each other in the passage, as they struggled for the honour of opening the front door to this most famous but most friendly of "Blues." Now, when the door was opened by both boys, there was a sight to bring back a double portion of diffidence to their hero; for there were Stephen and Bet. The girl with a slight bow passed Hal, who standing sideways made himself as small as might be, and was promptly seized by her brothers and dragged away; but Stephen waited smiling on the step, and, as Hal stepped down, he stepped up to shut the door and then turned to walk away with his friend.

"How good of you to come to wish me joy!" he said, laying his hand on the big arm of the athlete.

"Oh!" was all that Hal could say for immediate answer. He was thinking of the girl's face and how sweet it had looked and modest withal, as she passed him in the doorway. "Oh, yes, of course," he added presently, puzzled indeed and thinking that this was by no means the promised squelching of his friend. He seemed to have acquiesced in the engagement. Considering his position he gained time by saying to Stephen, as he had said to himself, "What capital boys!"

"Ain't they," cried Stephen, "and so wonderfully kind to me!"

"I dare say," said Hal, wondering at this show of modesty in his arrogant friend.

Stephen Calinari

"And they are clever too; they will go far, especially Neddy. There is something unusual in Ned, Sir Joshua's snap of the fingers, you know."

"Sir who's what? But I say, Steve, is this thing really true?" he asked with an effort at severity.

"True that I'm going to be married?" And, as Hal nodded, frowning anxiously, he answered his own question, gravely, with decision, "Yes, thank God!"

"But your grandfather? Will he stand it?"

"He will have to stand it. He ought to be on his knees for it. Poor dear old Grandada! I hope he won't mind much."

"I say, old chap—you won't mind my asking? Have you got anything of your own?"

Hal was beginning to feel that he was at last on the right track; here was a sample of the good sense which he had stepped across to deliver; his innocent face assumed a judicial expression. But Stephen took it with a baffling levity and answered with a smile that, if he referred to money, he had none.

"Very well then?" That was what Hal called a "clincher."

"If Grandada cut me off with a shilling, I shall have to wait a bit till I make some shillings for myself."

"And do you really mean that you would give up all that?"

"Grandada's money? Yes."

"But these people? I mean—would Mrs. Coop want you, if——" he paused in perplexity.

"Yes," said Stephen, laughing. "I have had it all out with Betty and with her mother and with Chaloner."

In the Cathedral City

They have said all that could be said. As for Chaloner, I think that he would forbid the banns if he could. Luckily he has been called back to work and has had to go with his sermon unfinished. But his mother is wiser than he. She will trust her child to me, whether I be rich or poor. Only I must go to work and show that I can keep a wife before I marry one."

"Well, but there is your own mother," said Hal, on whom this idea had dawned; "you ought to think of her, you know."

"So I do."

"She can't like it." Perhaps this would be the "clinch."

Stephen seemed to consider this, musing with a smile on his lips. "She won't mind much," he said, "not very much nor very long. Dear mother. She would want to help me with money after a bit; but all the money is really my grandfather's; and, if he cut me off, I'll make my own way. I half hope he will. Only it would hurt him more than me."

"By George!" said Hal in amazement.

"You know my cheek of old," said Stephen; "I've got it all back, all my old confidence. I can make my way."

"And politics and all that?" asked Hal, looking down on his friend with perplexed eyes.

"Politics can wait. Dear old man, it's all simple enough. If I have money, I will go on reading and learning till I can take hold of public affairs with some effect; but if I am poor I will make my living, and so soon as I have made enough for two I'll marry Betty."

Stephen Calinari

I shall be twice the man then. You don't understand that yet; but I hope you will some day."

"By George!" Hal was lost in wonder.

"She is so simple," said Stephen; "she does good as if she could not help it; and if I am to be of any good, more than half will be hers. She is *ἀγαθὰ φρονεῖ*, you know—have you got to the Ethics yet, old man? I am so absurdly happy."

"By George!"

"Wish me joy with all your heart, old man!"

"Yes, by George, I do!"

"And of course you will be my best man."

"Thanks awfully!" and he put his big hand on the nearest shoulder of his friend with an affectionate pressure.

"And now I can't waste any more time with you," said Stephen, laughing. "I shall tell her that you approve and will see me through on the great day." And so he pressed again the hand of his friend and turned away with joy.

As the envoy walked slowly homeward, his large slow mind reviewed his embassy. He had gone forth to save Stephen from making a fool of himself; he had promised to help him in the process. Perhaps after all to marry a girl like this was not to make a fool of oneself. He frowned with perplexity. The mere engagement seemed to have done Stephen good, to have made him more of a man in the eyes of this believer in manliness. "Hanged if I don't think it's the right thing for him!" he said as he stood still before the door of the Deanery. He said very little of his visit

An End and a Beginning

to the Coop family; and he did not tell his mother, until many days had passed, that he had promised to be best man at the wedding.

CHAPTER LIV

AN END AND A BEGINNING

ON the day after the happy failure of Hal's rescue party a more potent force appeared upon the scene. Madam in person, attended by her devoted maid and escorted by Lord Ranmore, advanced upon the cathedral city and occupied the best rooms of the old hotel. It was afternoon; it seemed, as in the island of the Lotus, that there it might be always afternoon. A grateful coolness had come as day declined, a silence held the air—an ancient peace. The old grey town stood dreaming like a lichen-covered tree; the busy building of men in prosperous growing cities seemed a thousand miles away; this place was no work of men's hands, but of Nature only.

To Madame Calinari, somewhat disturbed from her supreme serenity, this home of peace was soothing, as the tranquil hour was soothing. It was so easy to accept one's fate, so fatiguing even to think of a contest. Conscientiously she tried to stimulate the maternal anxiety which had brought her there; but as she sat in the old bow window, from which she could see the tall tower of the cathedral rise in its stately calm above the huddled roofs, a kindred peace possessed her soul. The ancient inn breathed comfort; the tea was unex-

Stephen Calinari

pectedly good ; there were pigeons on the low red roof—messengers of calm they seemed to her as she watched them through the leaded panes. Why should she strive and cry? What could she wish more deeply in the world than the happiness of her only son? Perhaps he had judged rightly of his own happiness. It was true that clever men did foolish things till sheer stupidity seemed the only safety of the male ; yet her clever boy might be right, and this, which he so ardently desired, might after all be for his good.

From this calm mood she was roused by the entrance of Lord Ranmore, who, though he gave his thoughts but little tongue, was at this hour far more anxious than the mother whose only child was in danger. He had gone out to find the house of Coop ; and he now came in quickly, with decision, and told her that, if she proposed to call on Mrs. Coop that evening, she must come forth at once. She rose obedient, summoning as she rose every shred of the anxiety which she was bound to feel.

“ Let us go at once,” she said, and immediately went before him down the old dark staircase.

Together they passed through the tender twilight of the streets, and came to the old house brooding behind its hanging chains, a very haven of repose. The elderly maid kept them waiting a while on the step, and when she opened the door she viewed them with an eye of suspicion ; but she let them in, and led them straight to the dim spacious parlour of the family. None of the family were there ; and the maid, going away to look for her mistress, shut the door behind her and

An End and a Beginning

left the visitors in the silence. The window stood wide open to the garden, and the scents of evening came in and filled the room. Madam looked around her with a tempered curiosity. It seemed a poor place in her eyes. There was a litter of books and papers on the table, and on the chairs old chintzes faded by the sun; but yet it appealed to her by an air of home. Lord Ranmore felt this too. He moved nearer to the open window, and she followed him. The garden drew them with its fragrance and charm; it seemed part of the room, where old pots and jars were full of garden flowers. But the garden was much lighter than the room, and in this clearer light a girl was standing so near that they could see her face. The girl was unconscious of these strangers, who looked out on her from the dimness. She was standing still, with her hat in her hand, dreaming, just breathing in the sweet enchanted place. It was Betty. She had been in the cathedral listening to an anthem which she loved; nor does it seem too fanciful to believe that there lingered in her face a subtle charm of this high melody. She stood as if she listened still, herself in beauty like the messengers who bring the gospel of peace.

No words were needed to tell Madam who this girl was. Her calm pulse quickened as she gazed; she saw with an unusual clearness, and the procession of her thoughts moved on in order like to this: "What a sweet face! I can see a little how Steenie sees it. But it makes no claim for admiration; it is too simple; it would make no effect in a crowd. And the shoulders are too square. She will never be smart; she will not

Stephen Calinari

even know what it means; she will never even wish to be smart." And here she sighed. "But Steenie loves the face. How sweet it is! It will win Grandada. Poor Grandada! It will win him in five minutes. He will begin to plan introductions for her; he will think of this woman and that who will be of use to her; he will foresee a great social success for her. Poor Grandada! He will not know that she will never have his great social success. But I know it. Of course she will make friends. And first of all she will win Grandada; and that makes it all easy. Am I on Steenie's side then? Have I come down here for this? Has she won me? Ah yes, she will make friends. What a sweet face!"

Suddenly the flow of thoughts was broken. She almost cried aloud; for there was Stephen coming through the garden—coming to the girl who stood so quiet there. His mother thought that he would see her at the window, but he had eyes for only one woman. She sighed again as she knew this. In her boy's face she saw a new light, love, loyalty, reverence. She wished to call to him, but the words died on her lips. She wondered to find herself so deeply moved. Her breath failed her as she thought that she would see his kiss. She would have turned away her eyes but could not; she shrank from the sight, and yet she wished herself to take the girl into her arms. As the boy's hand touched the girl's Madam heard a sound beside her, and remembered Lord Ranmore, whom she had forgotten altogether. He had turned away that he might not see the meeting of the lovers. An unusual

An End and a Beginning

modesty had touched both these elderly people. The eyes which they turned from the garden met with a new sympathy, and each saw in the other's eyes with wonder a moisture near to tears. A common feeling touched them both, but the man more deeply, stirring old memories of love and loss, of the promise in the springtide of youth, and the pathos of the procession of veiled hours. To these pilgrims who had journeyed far along the common road, their own youth seemed close, closer than yesterday. Moved by one impulse, they turned again to the window, and saw through the mist of unshed tears where girl and boy stood hand in hand in the garden of enchantment.

